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MAORI WITCHERY

Native Life in New Zealand

BY

C. R. BROWNE

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To

JOHN E. W. HONNYWILL, F.R.G.S.

PRIEST IN HOLY ORDERS

"Truth is stranger than fiction."

PREFACE

In this account of my experiences among the Maoris very many years ago, I have endeavoured as far as possible to keep to the actual facts and to show how they affected the lives of those of the Maori race with whom I was brought in contact, when opening up their lands for the New Zealand Government.

If it be correct, as they say, that a true story of real people is never so interesting as one where the plot and characters are invented to fit each other, then this book is bound to prove poor reading, for the Maoris I write of were real, living people who acted for the most part as I have chronicled.

The chivalrous Ngatae with his clever son Kongé, who "hid his light under a bushel," Wahanui the Wise, savage Porou, the cunning murderer Takirau, Whakapaki and his clairvoyant wife, sweet-serious Te Aitu and pretty Hinewhiu, saucy Aorere and Amohaere—all these lived and moved and had their being, but now most, if not all of them, have gone to the shadow-land of Te Reinga.

The historian Froude said of the Maoris that they were the finest race in the world, "not even excepting the British," and my intimate knowledge of them compels me to agree with him. One very rarely meets with a bully like Porou or men like Takirau and Hika—their stamp is almost unknown. Take them all through, Maoris are without vice, and have the hearts of little children.

And although the men of Tuhua did kill Moffatt, the lying forger what else were they to do to protect

themselves? And if the slaying was in cold blood, it was quick and prompt, without torture. Ngatae did not do things by halves. Besides which he spared me, although in his heart he thought I deserved death, as being the emissary of a Government which had not kept its word. Lying is abhorrent to a Maori.

The fierce Hauhaus of Manganui-a-te-ao fattened me up as a victim for slaughter, but can one wonder at their anger? They knew the purpose for which I had come: namely, to open up their lands to the white man, whom they detested.

As a friendly Maori once said to me, "If a white man enters a Maori wharé, he is made welcome and given food to eat, but if a Maori dares to enter a white man's house, he is thrown out as if he were a dog."

Therein lies the crux of the whole thing. The two races can never *assimilate*, and the Maoris, knowing it to be a fact, wished only to be left to themselves.

Sir George Grey, the long-since Governor of New Zealand, could not say enough in their praise, and the Maoris reciprocated his affection for them. "Hori Kerei," as they called him, was almost as a god to them, and he never tired of working for their benefit.

I had a very real love for the Maoris, and great were their entreaties that I should remain with them; many letters have I received from them long after I had left Maoriland, imploring me to return and take up my abode with them.

But Fate ruled otherwise, and I have never revisited Tuhua. If I returned I should see only the "ghosts" of the dear people I knew so well. I would far rather wait and meet them in Te Reinga, and hear them calling their welcome to me—"Naumai! E Para!"

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PART I

MAORILAND BEFORE I WENT THERE

CHAPTER I

NGATAE'S DREAM

NGATAE, Chief of the Maoris, sat in the porch of his house, smoking hard and thinking deeply. The more he thought, the harder he pulled at his pipe, until presently he seemed to be enveloped in smoke.

"Koia kei akoe," grunted his eldest wife Ata, who was sitting next to him. "You are just like a cloud. Give me your pipe to smoke; otherwise you will soon be floating up to the sky."

Ngatae, the owner of four wives, laughed softly and passed his lighted pipe on to the woman. His second and third wives were lying half asleep inside the house behind him. His fourth and newly made spouse Aorere was lying on her back a few feet in front of him, while having her lips tattooed to show she was a married woman.

Other Maoris of the tribe were squatted round, for the most part smoking and cracking jokes. Aorere would now and again giggle in amusement, although the tears were streaming down her cheeks from the pain of the tattooing.

The Chief seemed unable to keep his gaze off her for long, and Ata scowled jealously each time he caught the girl's eye and smiled.

For Ngatae, besides being supreme ruler, was also a

good-looking man, and Ata wanted him all to herself. The other two wives were mere playthings of the hour, and Ngatae had never made favourites of them. But with Ata it was different: she had always been his right hand, and it was to her he went for counsel or advice. Besides which, she was the only one of his wives who had borne him a child which lived. She had given him Kongé, now nineteen years old and heir to the chieftainship.

So, perhaps naturally, the woman felt angry as she watched Ngatae smile on Aorere, the meaning of whose name is "Flying Cloud."

All around the scenery was beautiful, as most New Zealand scenery is. On one side rose terrace upon terrace of fern-covered land, with bush-clad ranges beyond, stretching out towards Lake Taupo, with the giant hills of Hikurangi and Maungatapu (Sacred Mountain) looking down on them. On the south side lay the Whanganui River, with wooded hills on the other bank appearing blue and misty in the distance where they merged with the cloudless sky. Far away to the south-east towered the snow-capped mountain of Ruapehu, with the volcanic Tongariro alongside emitting occasional puffs of smoke.

The roar of the distant rapids could be heard, together with the ceaseless chirp of the cicadas in the neighbouring bush. Nothing else, except the occasional laughter and talk of the Maori dwellers in the village of Taumarunui, or the Place of Great Shadow.

Such it was before the coming of the white man.

The day was oppressively hot, and, one by one, the Maoris dropped off to sleep just where they rested. Aorere's tattooing was finished, and she too was soon nodding. The enormous figure of Wahanui, Ngatae's

Chief Counsellor, lay in a heap just inside the porch of the house. He weighed about twenty-two stone, and was also a man of great weight in the rulings of the tribe. From his mouth now came most discordant sounds, far louder than those which issued from the mouths of other snorers, of whom there were many. The only people who were quite awake were Ngatae and Ata.

"Anana!" said the Chief pensively. "They are worse than pigs."

Ata smiled contemptuously. She was never known to laugh.

"You are their Rangatira (Chief), O Ngatae," she answered. "You ought to make a bigger noise than they do. Why not try?"

"That is impossible," he laughed; "my name is not Thunder." Then he cried out, "Wake up, O pigs! I would speak with you when you have ceased grunting."

And they one and all sat up, rubbing their eyes and yawning, all save Wahanui, who continued to emit trumpet-like sounds from his throat.

"Ke!" said a girl, laughing. "Fancy being married to Wahanui!"

"No wonder his wife died!" cried another. "They say she was as flat as a board when they buried her."

"She was stone deaf, too, after she had slept in his house for a week," drawled Kongé, for whom the fair sex had a great fascination.

"That is longer than your wife will live, O Kongé," giggled Aorere. "You will get tired of her before then, and be chasing another woman round."

Kongé smiled placidly, as if he were being paid a great compliment. In appearance he was very like a Chinaman.

"Anana!" screamed a girl in pretended alarm. "Wahanui is trying to sit up. I thought it was an earthquake!"

"Presently he will be spitting out smoke and flames," said another, "like Tongariro when he is angry."

Wahanui took no notice whatever of these remarks, but proceeded to fill his pipe, which he afterwards handed to a boy to light at the little charcoal fire which they keep burning in the houses.

"Listen, O friends!" then cried Ngatae in his clear voice. "Last night I had a dream, and ever since then I have been wondering what is the meaning thereof."

"Anana!" said his listeners eagerly; "behold the great Chief has dreamt."

For the Maoris put great faith in dreams, which, by the way, they are seldom troubled with, owing partly to their having good digestions and partly to the uneventful lives they lead.

"What was your dream, O Ngatae?" they shouted impatiently.

"Listen," he replied, "and ye shall hear. It was like this: In my dream I was travelling from here towards Lake Taupo, but I did not appear to be walking; I was floating along in the air, as one sometimes floats in the water, but gradually I was coming down nearer and nearer to the earth, until, at the top of the hill Moerangi, I was but the height of two men from the path which leads from Taupo. And as I floated steadily there, behold two great snakes came towards me along the track!"

"Koia ano!" muttered his eager listeners; "just fancy snakes!"

"The foremost of the two snakes was white, and his eyes were those of a devil," continued the Chief.

"Koia! Koia!" exclaimed his audience. "It was a devil right enough.

"The snake which followed behind was darker in colour, and his eyes were not so fierce as those of the white devil," explained Ngatae; "but I was sore troubled at the sight of them both, and, if I had had a gun, I would have fired at them. But, in my dream, I had no weapon, so I called out to the snakes to frighten them back to their own country —three times I shouted to them—but they continued their journey towards this place, and as the white devil glided past he turned his head and hissed at me.

"Then I woke," said Ngatae, "trembling for very fear what harm the monsters might work to us. But I know not the interpretation of my dream."

As soon as the Chief had finished speaking, a great chattering arose among the Maoris, for they are like children in their ways and thoughts and their fondness for joking.

Aorere suggested, as well as her sore lips would allow her, that her husband must have eaten too many eels for supper the night before, which had caused him to dream of snakes.

There was a shout of laughter at this suggestion. Then Kongé, whose thoughts were mostly on women, said the meaning he put to the dream was that the two reptiles were two strange women from the Ngatihau tribe which dwelt near Taupo coming to make love to Ngatae, the white snake being a half-caste with a vile temper and her companion a full Maori with slimy ways.

"Ngatae can pass them on to you, O Kongé," shouted

one of the women; "a sharp tongue will keep you in order."

"But there are no snakes in New Zealand," said an old man. "How then did Ngatae know what they are like?"

"Everyone knows what snakes are like," snapped Ata; "just like eels, only much bigger, and with poisonous tongues."

"Like women's," suggested Kongé blandly.

"If women's tongues were poisonous, you would have died long ago, O Kongé," laughed a girl called Te Aitu, a cousin of Ngatae's.

"Te Aitu is right," agreed Ngatae; "but this is only children's talk. What sayest thou, O Wahanui, as to the meaning of my dream?"

Then Wahanui, who was considered a very wise man indeed, said, "Lo! O Ngatae. This is the interpretation I put on your dream: The white snake is the white man Wiremu, known by his own people as Moffatt.[1] The dark snake is a Maori who accompanies him from Taupo, where they say Wiremu now lives, having taken unto himself a Maori wife. Wiremu has three times sent word here that he intends to return to Tuhua, and three times have you turned him back, even as you tried three times in your dream to turn back the snakes. Therefore, my word is this: Beware lest Wiremu return here to wreak more harm on you and your people."

[1] Moffatt was a clever but wrong-minded European, who had tried to forge the signatures of Maori chieftains to the sale of their lands, and so incurred the hatred of the natives. He had also taught the Maoris how to manufacture gunpowder, and thus got himself into trouble with the Government. Between the two he had been unwillingly forced to spend some months in a Government gaol, whence he was now returning to the people who had warned him that they would slay him, should he ever set foot again in Tuhua.

There were angry murmurs among the listeners and cries of hatred against Moffatt, which were checked by a gesture from Ngatae.

"But surely, O Wahanui," he said in his thoughtful way, "Wiremu would not dare to return here, for I sent him word three times that he would be slain, should he come to Tuhua."

"O Chief!" replied the Big Counsellor, "what I have said I have said. Wiremu knows no fear, and he is as cunning as the serpent you beheld in your dream. They say he has left treasure here in our land, and he will surely come to fetch it."

"Then he will die," said Ngatae angrily.

"Yes, he will die," echoed Wahanui placidly.

CHAPTER II

MATAHANEA

MATAHANEA was a Maori village lying up the Whanganui River, eastward of the kraal where Ngatae dwelt, about a mile and a half distant. It was smaller than Taumarunui, but still it was of a fair size, and of some importance as an outpost.

The Chief here was a man called Whakapaki, a mild-mannered, intelligent Maori, with a shrewd, good-tempered wife named Rangi. They had both been present at Ngatae's dwelling when the dream was told, and had heard Wahanui's interpretation thereof. Now they were trotting homeward, one behind the other, barefooted and silent.

At length the woman said to her husband, who was ahead, "My heart is sad for reason of the Chief's dream. I can see blood to follow."

"You can foretell the future where others fail," replied Whakapaki. "Do you think Wahanui's words will prove true regarding the coming of Wiremu?"

"Alas! yes," said Rangi. "I fear the wicked white man will return to Tuhua and be slain by our people."

"I wonder," said Whakapaki shrewdly, "if Ngatae has received word that Wiremu is on his way, which caused him to dream!"

" Perhaps you are right," replied the woman wonderingly. " I did not think of that. If Ngatae knows, be sure Wahanui knows also."

Then they reached their canoe, which was tied with flax to a bush opposite the village, and, stepping in, they paddled across the river.

For Matahanea was built entirely on the south side of the Whanganui, which here ran sluggishly and at a great depth, a hundred yards or more wide.

Children were bathing near the landing-place, diving in and swimming about like ducks, with a great chatter and splashing.

Among them was a crazy girl of some fifteen summers, called Te Rehe, or " the Wrinkled," for her face was as puckered as that of an old woman. She ran naked and dripping to meet the chief and his wife as they landed.

" Greetings to you both," she panted.

" Greeting to you, O Rehe," they replied ; " but shame on you for your nakedness among all these boys. You are too big to run wild among them."

" Me aha ! " said the girl, which is a Maori expression meaning " It does not matter." So she capered ahead of them with strange antics, until Rangi forced her to go back for her garments at the river bank. Maoris are always kind to those who are of weak intellect, and look on them as nearer the gods than themselves.

Then Rangi called the other women, and went with them to scrape potatoes, with shells in lieu of knives, in preparation for the evening meal.

When she rejoined her husband, he was sitting in the porch of his wharé, talking to a garrulous old man called

Hokimai and a sullen-looking, powerfully built Maori named Porou.

Hokimai, who by the way was never known to be clean, was all smiles and gesticulations, and slightly apologetic in his attitude towards Whakapaki, for the old man was of lowly birth and a "taurekareka," which means one taken captive in war. So he cringed somewhat.

But not so Porou. He was a savage all through, and stood in fear of no man. Nor was he any man's friend. He was now holding forth in his fierce way in reference to Whakapaki's account of Ngatae's dream.

"What is there to fear," he cried, "even though this slave of a white man does come? Have we not guns and bullets, as well as knives and mérés? Can we not silence him for ever?"

"The Maori does not kill a man in cold blood," replied Whakapaki sternly.

"Do you call Wiremu a man?" shouted Porou angrily. "I would think no more of killing him than I would of killing that mangy dog over there." And he flung a stone at the brute, which ran yelping away, for the man's aim had been good.

His wife, Hinewhiu, sitting beside her lord and master, ventured to remonstrate, whereupon Porou pushed her roughly with his elbow, telling her to hold her peace.

Now Hinewhiu was by far the most beautiful of all the women of that tribe, more beautiful even than "Flying Cloud." She was tall and slim and graceful, with a charming expression. Her relatives had compelled her to marry Porou, whom she feared and disliked, but she put up with his brutality on account of her little son, a boy of three, whom she idolised.

So she did not attempt to remonstrate with her husband on this occasion, though the tears were not far off as she rose to follow the other women to the cooking-ovens, for Rangi had given the signal that the meal was ready to be dished.

As usual, they marched in single file to fetch the food, put it in large bowls, and then filed back to place the bowls before the men, who devoured the pork and potatoes greedily, fishing the savoury mess out with their fingers, which they finally sucked when their appetites were satisfied.

Then came the pipes, amid grunts of satisfaction. "Ka pai! Ka ki taaku puku" (It is good! My stomach is filled), they grunted one to another.

The Maori is essentially a lazy man. He was intended by nature for a warrior, and now he still has all the fighting instincts, but there is no enemy for him to practise on. So he eats, smokes and sleeps, and if he is old, talks of bygone battles. Occasionally they sally forth to kill wild pigs, descendants of those Captain Cook left in the country to increase and multiply.

But that is about the only exercise they take. They are, perhaps, seen at their best when canoeing down the rapids, where one little fault of judgment would lead to disaster. They keep their heads marvellously and obey the helmsman's yelled orders to a moment.

The canoe shoots like lightning through boiling masses of foam, with ugly rocks showing their teeth all the way down, emerging eventually into still water, with the crew paddling like machinery, as if nothing were behind them. Here and there, where a narrow rapid heads them straight for a cliff, at whose foot it would be impossible to steer round with the stream, the helmsman will shout an order

when they are a few feet away from the rock, and the crew will spring out as one man, and turn the canoe into safety, then jump in cleverly and continue their journey. Pluck and combination pull them through.

In this great land of Tuhua, where Ngatae reigned supreme, he himself was considered bravest of all the warriors. Certainly none was more skilled than he in the use of the gun, the spear or the méré, and there was no better helmsman in the nation than Ngatae.

The "tohunga," or witch-doctor, was Ngatae's only rival, and his influence was greater perhaps than the Chief was aware of. The methods employed by the priest-wizard were secret and mysterious, and so struck terror to the hearts of a race which is brimful of superstition. According to the Maori idea, the tohunga is in direct communication with the gods, and therefore all-powerful.

He arrived at Matahanea on the evening of the day when Ngatae told his dream, and while the Maoris were still discussing it in excited groups, a voice was heard calling from the other side of the river for someone to fetch him across.

"It is Tohiora, the tohunga," said Te Rehe, springing up. "I know his voice. I will paddle him over." And she ran swiftly to the river.

"Who is ill?" asked Whakapaki.

"Kuiwai," answered his wife, "the wife of Tupu. Presently perhaps she will die."

No one spoke while the witch-doctor glided noiselessly through their midst, guided by the crazy girl Te Rehe to where the sick woman lay. They breathed more freely when he had passed.

When Tohiora reached the sick-bed he majestically

waved back the curious females who surrounded it, then, having asked a few questions as to the nature of the complaint, squatted down opposite Kuiwai. He was a tall, thin man, with straggling white whiskers round his face which showed up prominently against his dark skin. He looked as cunning as a fox, and woe betide those who offended him, for he was relentless in his wrath. He was, of course, a hypnotist.

Kuiwai kept her face turned away from him as if she feared his gaze, but the tohunga started to chant a weird incantation, and by degrees she moved her head round until she was presently looking spell-bound into the man's eyes. Soon she lost consciousness and finally fell asleep.

Then Tohiora leaned over her and made passes with his hands, chanting all the time in a dreary monotone.

After a time he ceased and stood up. Then, turning to the attendants, he said, "It is well. The gods have not signified their wrath. When the woman wakes, give her juice of the flax-root to drink. To-morrow I will come again."

Then he stalked away from the place, with Te Rehe capering alongside of him, talking to herself.

And on the morrow there were great rejoicings, for the flax-root had done its work and Kuiwai was on the road to recovery. But if the witch-doctor had said that nothing could save her, the woman would have died in obedience to his will, although there was next to nothing the matter with her.

CHAPTER III

THE KILLING OF MOFFATT

THERE is a great hill called Moerangi which rears its head between Ngatae's domains and the pumice plains which lie in the centre of the island, and over this hill winds the track leading from Tuhua to the Sea of Taupo, for so the Maoris designate the lake of that name, which is from twenty to thirty miles in diameter.

The track runs for the most part along the tops of ridges, avoiding the highest points of the range. It is all bush land there—virgin forest with gigantic trees of many varieties and of great beauty.

Swarms of birds of various kinds were flying about and making a great noise: the tui (parson-bird) with his bell-like note, sombre-hued parrots, bright parroquets, canaries in flocks flying low to betoken rain, thrushes and numerous others; and on the high ground where the trees are stunted the New Zealand crow, which the Maoris call "kokako," from the peculiar noise he makes, the tamest bird in the bush and the only one not fit for food, for his flesh is black.

One day a Maori boy called Muru was snaring birds a short distance below the track on this hill of Moerangi. It was getting late in the afternoon, and Muru had just

decided to return to Matahanea, as the way was long, with the mighty Whanganui River to ford about half-way to the Kaainga (village), and there is nothing the Maori dreads so much as the dark, when, according to him, the earth is repeopled by spirits from the Reinga, which is their dwelling-place after death.

So Muru gathered up his belongings and his spoil, when his sharp ears heard the tread of feet on the track above him, coming from the direction of Taupo.

And fourteen-year-old Muru said to himself, "Lo! a white man cometh, for he has boots on his feet." Then he heard voices, so he argued to himself, "There must be more than one person, unless the man is porangi (mad), and talks with spirits, even as Te Rehe does."

So he crept up to the edge of the track and waited, scarcely daring to breathe.

There was a bend in the path a few yards distant, and presently round this bend came a white man, followed by a Maori.

"Na! Ko Wiremu!" gasped Muru. Then he sprang out into the middle of the narrow track and cried out, "Greeting, O Wiremu! Greeting to you and your Maori!" And the two replied, "Greeting, O boy!"

Then Muru went on eagerly to ask Moffatt why he had come back to Tuhua. And the white man replied curtly, "That is my business."

"But you will be slain," cried the lad, "for Ngatae has warned you three times. Turn back ere it be too late."

And as Moffatt stood to fill and light his pipe, the youngster went on pleading with him, but suddenly Moffatt sprang forward and flung Muru back, so that he almost fell, at the same time letting out a volley of oaths

and telling the boy to hold his tongue or it would be the worse for him.

Then Muru, seeing that he could not persuade the man, turned suddenly and sped along the track towards Matahanea.

Compared with a white man, a Maori is short from the knee down, and therefore not gifted with great speed ; but Muru was young and knew all the short cuts, so that he had forded the river and was well on his way to Matahanea before Wiremu and his friend had emerged from the bush.

He trotted on another mile and then rested on top of a low hill. From thence he could see the two men cross the Whanganui and then turn and follow in his tracks. So Muru sped on to the village, and did not slacken pace until he had reached the Chief's house, where Whakapaki, his wife Rangi and many others were squatting round the front of the wharé.

" Oh, friends ! " panted Muru, " Wiremu has come back to Tuhua, and with him a strange Maori."

" Thou art bewitched, boy," replied the Chief. " Wiremu would not dare set foot here again."

" Have I not eyes in my head, O Whakapaki ? " screamed Muru. " Besides, I spoke with the white man, and begged him to turn back, but he would not listen, and after a time he grew angry and struck me."

Then there was a great murmuring among the natives, for a blow could not be overlooked, especially when dealt to a child. And above all was to be heard the voice of Rangi crying, " Alas ! Alas ! Ngatae's dream has come true."

Presently the fierce Porou stood up and said, " I will carry the tidings to Ngatae."

"Lo! I will go with thee to the Chief," said a lynx-eyed man called Takirau, and he rose up also and followed Porou.

So the two departed, and the Maoris who were in the village lit a fire on a hill near by, as a signal to the tribe that strangers were approaching.

Then they sat in silence until Moffatt and his Maori strode into their midst, accompanied by the usual crowd of yelping, mangy, half-starved dogs which you will always find in a Maori village.

When silence was restored, Whakapaki called out, "What brings you here, O Wiremu?"

"I have come to fetch some things I left behind in Tuhua," replied Moffatt calmly, as he flung off the blankets he had carried on his back, and sat down on them. His Maori friend did likewise.

Then Rangi cried out in a high-pitched wail, "Lo! I see death in the white man's face. His head is as that of a corpse. Aué!"

And the other women joined in the wailing. "Aué! Aué!" they howled. "Even as a dead man! So says Rangi. Aué! Aué!"

But Moffatt only laughed.

"You laugh, O Wiremu," said Whakapaki sternly, "but you must know full well that Ngatae has sworn to slay you if you set foot in Tuhua."

"Ngatae does not mean it," said Moffatt lightly. "He will not kill me when I explain matters."

And the men who were sitting round him listening, with set, stern faces, called out angrily to the white man that they would not have him amongst them.

"Go back to your own people!" they cried. "You

signed our names before to papers giving away our lands. Beware lest you do so again ! "

" If you cross the river here you will surely die," said Whakapaki, " and we do not want you to be killed, although you deserve it. My people will not touch you if you go back to-morrow to Taupo, but woe betide you if Ngatae's men find you on the other side of the river ! "

To all of which Moffatt listened in a tired way, as if the matter did not much concern him. Now and again he spoke in an undertone to his Maori companion, who looked somewhat frightened and bewildered.

Presently some women placed food before the two travellers, and the Maori from Taupo ate greedily, but the white man not at all.

" Lo ! the corpse requires no food," cried Rangi.

" But he requires drink," retorted Moffatt.

So they brought him a gourd full of water, which he emptied. Then, lighting his pipe, he announced his intention of proceeding on his journey.

But, at this, the tribe ran round the two, and partly by force and partly by entreaty persuaded the white man to stay the night at Matahanea to await Ngatae's commands.

By this time it was nearly dark, so the two lay down on their blankets in the hut which was given up to them. And far into the night Whakapaki and his wife pleaded with Moffatt to turn back, and eventually he promised not to proceed any further without permission from Ngatae. So at length the village was hushed in slumber.

. . . . . .

" Wake ! Wake ! " said a voice in Whakapaki's ear at dawn the next day, and the Chief, sitting up quickly, saw Te Rehe stooping over him, with her hand on his shoulder.

"The white man has crossed the river," she went on hurriedly. "I saw him and his Maori friend lighting their pipes on the other bank just now."

And Whakapaki, springing up, woke his wife Rangi and told her, then hastily put on a garment and ran with the crazy girl to the landing-place, where they jumped into a canoe and paddled across. But as they scrambled up the opposite bank there was the report of a gun, and Whakapaki and the girl cried simultaneously, "Aué! they have killed Wiremu!"

So they ran panting on about a hundred yards, and there they came on the white man and his friend standing on the track, facing eight Maoris of the Tuhua tribe, who had their guns in their hands.

One of the eight, named Takirau, the same who had gone with Porou to carry the tidings to Ngatae of Wiremu's arrival, had just fired at Moffatt and shot him, at a distance of ten or twelve yards. And Moffatt was crying out, "Kati! Kati! (Enough!) O men of Tuhua. I will return whence I came. I thought not Ngatae intended to slay me. I will go back to Taupo."

Then Whakapaki called out to the eight, "What is this that ye have done, O men of Ngatae's tribe? Will ye bring shame and trouble on the Maori race by slaying this white man?"

But they answered, "It is he who has brought shame and trouble on us by his evil ways."

"Let him go back now," besought Whakapaki. "Ye have wounded him; that is enough. Do not slay him, lest the gods be angry."

Then Porou, who was one of the eight, said, "If we let him go he will return here with the white soldiers of the

Queen, and we will lose our lands." So he turned to Takirau, who was crouching low for fear lest Moffatt should have a revolver to shoot back at him with, and told him to go in close and finish his man ; which he did, going quite near and again shooting Moffatt in the breast.

And Te Rehe screamed loudly, and threw herself face downwards in the fern.

Moffatt did not immediately fall, but stood swaying backwards and forwards, with his hand to his chest. Then he suddenly spun round in a circle and dropped on the track.

There he lay, with his head propped on his hand, and mocked the eight men who had been told to do Ngatae's bidding. For, with all his faults, Moffatt was a brave man.

After a little while, one of the eight beckoned to a lad called Te Hika, who had come on the scene with others, and this boy stole round behind Moffatt and split his skull with a tomahawk. The lad laughed with glee after he had done it, for he was of the same blood as Porou.

And all this time the Maori from Taupo had stood by the side of Wiremu, but now he cried out to the eight to kill him also, for his heart was very heavy for the loss of his friend. Great were his entreaties that they should slay him.

But the men of Tuhua bade him begone, as they had no quarrel with him. So he went back, sorrowing greatly.

And they buried Moffatt at the foot of the great hill called Maungatapu, or the Sacred Mountain. Some say that they first cut his heart out, but, as Whakapaki said, " If they did so it was wrong, for his was the heart of a brave man."

CHAPTER IV

KONGÉ'S AMOURS

LIFE with the Tuhua people went on much as usual after Moffatt's death. There was the same amount of eating, sleeping and smoking done as heretofore. The conversation, perhaps, was not so brisk, and attempts at jokes seemed to fall somewhat flat. Otherwise, there was no outward difference. But everyone appeared anxious, and there were many glances cast eastward and northward for signal fires.

As Hinewhiu whispered to Rangi when none were about, "It is only natural for Wiremu's relatives to seek revenge for his death." And Rangi grunted assent.

So they waited—all but Takirau, who fled to the hills in fear and trembling. For, he rightly argued, if any man was to be hanged by the English Government, it was himself, as he had actually fired the bullets into Moffatt.

But days and weeks and months went by, and still no avengers came. Word was brought through from the north by the Maoris living near the boundary of the "King Country," that the British Government was at first angry at the murder, but afterwards spoke contemptuously of the character Moffatt had borne. There was talk of a punitive expedition, but that was as far as they had got.

Then Ngatae had his thoughts turned elsewhere, and it was in this manner.

He was returning one evening at dusk by a fire, round which sat several women smoking and chatting in a low tone, and as he passed along barefooted, he heard a woman called Haria, whose back was turned towards him, say to the others, " Aorere has a lover. I know full well that she has."

Then the other women nudged her to be silent, for they caught sight of the Chief ; and as he looked round he saw Ata's eyes fixed on him with a look of triumph in them.

So Ngatae went on to his house in silence, but with a heavy heart, for very great was his love for Flying Cloud. He reasoned with himself that it might be mere gossip Haria had picked up or invented ; but if it were a true tale, then death of course was the only remedy.

He found his house empty, but his second and third wives were sitting smoking just outside.

" Where is Aorere ? " he asked them.

" Aua ! " they replied together, meaning that they did not know.

Presently Ata stole up from the semi-darkness and squatted down between her husband and the other two women.

Just then a girlish voice was heard singing softly, as its owner approached :

> " I am sighing always for thee, beloved.
> Listen to my song of love."

And presently Aorere, with a laugh, flung herself down next to Ngatae, and leant her head against his shoulder.

" I am tired," she said, with a sigh.

"Why tired?" queried Ngatae laughingly. "Hast been scraping too many potatoes?"

But the girl shook her head. "I am tired from much walking, O husband."

"She is called Flying Cloud," sneered Ata, "and yet she has to walk until her legs grow tired."

"Thy name means 'Dawn,' O Ata," retaliated Aorere, "but I think 'Night' would suit thee better, for thy ways are ways of darkness."

The other two wives laughed, and moved into the house, whither the rest followed and squatted or lay on the flax mats with which the floor was covered.

Then a huge form blocked the doorway, as Wahanui crawled through the small entrance and flopped down close to the Chief. Several other Maoris came in after him, until the room was full of men, women and smoke.

Chatter and laughter rang through the place, "doubtful" stories were bandied about and spicy jokes were fired off by these children of nature. The word "Maori" means "natural," and certainly no better name could be given to the race. Lying and felony were unknown amongst them, and the breaking of marriage ties was considered a very serious matter.

Kongé, the Chief's son, was by far the greatest offender where women were concerned, and the fines inflicted on him by way of punishment had reduced his worldly goods to an almost negligible quantity. He seemed to imagine that all women were common property, and only the day before he had been found guilty again, the lady in the case being his aunt, whom he had happened to meet in the potato grounds!

He sat there in Ngatae's house smiling sweetly, heedless

of the volley of chaff fired at him, and looking as if he really could not understand what he had done out of the ordinary. The unfortunate aunt sat opposite him, smoking a short black pipe, and each time she grunted abuse at him his somewhat Chinese features became more child-like and bland.

"You ought to feel pleased, Moka," said someone to the aggrieved aunt: "Kongé chose you out of many others."

"That is not true," replied Moka angrily, "for I was the only one in the potato ground."

At this there were fresh shrieks of laughter, for Moka was a middle-aged widow, with no vestige of beauty whatever.

"Perhaps you smiled at him?" suggested Te Aitu.

"I smile at him!" screamed the aunt. "I would as soon smile at a devil. Besides, he could not see my face, for my back was turned to him."

"Anana!" cried the Maoris. "Kongé mistook you for someone else!"

And the house rang with laughter, which made Moka look more savage than ever. Even the grim Ata smiled.

"Going to fetch more potatoes to-morrow, Kongé?" shouted a man.

"It is too far for him," said another. "He knows where the women get their firewood from. That is more his distance."

"Let him come!" shrieked several of the women. "He won't have a second chance."

But Kongé only smiled the more knowingly.

Then Ata of the dark thoughts said meaningly, "Aorere had better not walk far alone, as she sometimes does."

There was silence for a space and Ngatae's brow grew black as thunder, but Wahanui, the wise counsellor, said quietly, as if he were imparting a piece of news, "Aorere is wife to our Chief," and the Maoris murmured dignified assent.

"But what I would say to you is this, O Ngatae," went on Wahanui. "It is surely time Kongé took unto himself a wife. He is the Chief's son and is of man's estate. Why is it he has no wife to bear him children? There are many maidens in this land of Tuhua which you rule over who would be proud to become your daughter-in-law."

"You are right, O Wahanui," answered Ngatae, "and much thought have I given to the matter of my son's marriage. There are, as you say, many maidens in the land of Tuhua from whom to choose a wife for Kongé. I asked him if he had a fancy for any particular girl, and he replied that he had not—that he did not much mind who it was so long as she was good-tempered."

"What about Moka?" said a voice, which caused the angry aunt to scowl savagely.

"So I made inquiries," went on Ngatae, "in all the villages around here for damsels of good birth and appearance, for such must be those who are suggested as wives for my son. But most of these were lacking in one or both of these advantages, and eventually I chose one who is known to most of you. She is both beautiful and of high lineage. She is also said to be good-tempered," he added with a laugh.

"Has she much property?" asked Kongé blandly.

At which there was a babel of voices, shouting ironically, "Property!" "E ki property!" "Do you think, O Kongé, that she wants to buy you?"

" Turituri ! " (Silence !) shouted Wahanui. " Let the Chief finish speaking. He has not told us yet who the maiden is that he has chosen to be Kongé's wife."

" The maiden I have chosen," said Ngatae, " dwells at Taringamotu. Her name is Amohaere."

" Amohaere," echoed the crowd. " Ae, we know her.' " You have chosen well, O Ngatae." " It is good," and so on.

" She is an orphan," said Te Aitu, " so Kongé won't have a mother-in-law to keep him in order."

" No, but he will have another aunt," giggled Aorere, " for Amohaere lives with her aunt, the fat woman called Kahu, who has a tongue like a sharp knife."

No one thought of asking Kongé's views as to his projected marriage, but he went on smiling. He had seen the maiden and knew she was fair, so the rest did not worry him. She was a woman, and he hoped a good-tempered one.

" But will one wife be enough for Kongé ? " asked a wag innocently.

" We will begin with one," said Ngatae, smiling and yawning.

His subjects laughed, and those who were not sleeping there went out to their several huts, scurrying through the dark to dodge the evil spirits.

CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE OF KONGÉ

A BETROTHAL in Maoriland is rather a formidable affair, and is followed at once by the marriage, so that the two may almost be said to be one and the same ceremony.

There is afterwards great feasting and rejoicing, so when Ngatae sent word to Taringamotu that he was arriving with his retinue, in order to suggest his son Kongé as husband for Amohaere, there was much excitement in the village.

The Chief, Whaterangi, who looked rather like a respectable plumber out of work, left all the preparations to his wife Kahu, whose name signifies "Hawk." She was a stout, jolly-faced woman, full of fun and laughter, but possessed of a very jealous temper. Her husband let her have her own way in everything, and if, as generally happened, Kahu should make love to any stranger who visited them, Whaterangi would go to sleep until the courting was over. He was rather pleased than otherwise to know that his wife was enjoying herself, and therefore in a good temper. But if her love affairs went wrong, woe betide everyone within reach of her tongue.

Now Amohaere, who was Kahu's niece, was a very beauteous maiden; so much so that almost every man when he first beheld her would exclaim, "Kia ataahua mai

te wahine nei!" which means "What a lovely woman this is!" This would more than anything else cause Kahu to explode with wrath, and she would straightway order her niece away on some errand, so that only her own charms should be visible to the stranger.

Amohaere knew all this and dreaded any fresh arrivals, so tried to keep in the background until the men had gone.

She was an orphan, and had been brought up by Kahu, who was now most anxious to marry her niece out of the place, so that she should not stand between her and any good-looking stranger who came along.

Imagine, therefore, Kahu's delight when Ngatae's proposal for his son was brought to her. It was not only the easy way of getting rid of the girl out of Taringamotu, but the alliance would be an honour to the chosen bride as well as to her adoptive parents. For Kongé would some day be Paramount Chief of all the Maoris for miles round, and Amohaere would be his principal wife. She knew she would not be the only wife, for she had heard all about Kongé's goings-on with regard to women, and rather anticipated a harem.

As for Amohaere, she was not asked. She was like a bird caught in a snare. If she had been consulted, she would have said "No, thanks" most decidedly, for she knew a man like Kongé could never be faithful to his wife for any length of time. She had met him once when visiting at Taumarunui, and noticed then that he pressed his nose against hers for a much longer time than was necessary, while his narrow slits of eyes looked longingly into her big brown ones. Amohaere had, then, relieved her feelings by a contemptuous grunt, which had no effect on the amorous Kongé, who only smiled more blandly than before.

Now she was told she had to marry him! She loathed the idea, but knew it was useless to refuse, so she simply shrugged her shoulders and said "Meaha." Anyhow, she would escape from Kahu's jealous temper and become someone of importance in the tribe. So "Meaha," she kept saying to herself, "it does not matter; what is to be is"; for Amohaere, like the rest of the Maori race, was imbued with fatalism.

So one fine day in summer the cavalcade set out from Taumarunui to journey to Taringamotu, which is an easy day's march to the northward through open country. With the exception of a few old and infirm people, nearly the whole population of Taumarunui and Matahanea went to the wedding. A few were mounted, but the majority walked. Ngatae rode at the head of the procession, with Wahanui close behind mounted on the biggest and strongest horse that could be mustered, with a spare horse to take its place half-way. Kongé was on a young beast which was only half-broken, and was doing his best to break the animal's heart by harsh usage; for such is their idea of training. The Maori will never make a good horseman. He overrates his mount's capabilities and underrates its sensitiveness.

However, they all managed to struggle along somehow, with old Hokimai bringing up the rear in an apologetic manner; but as it was only a narrow bridle track that they had to travel on the going was not rapid.

They were all in good spirits, laughing and joking, and had covered about a third of the distance they had to go, when suddenly Ngatae was heard crying out to them to halt.

"He mokomoko!" (A lizard!), he yelled at the top of his voice. "Turn back quickly!"

And with one accord they all turned round and hurriedly retraced their steps. Hokimai, being now at the front, did his best to keep there, but the others soon overtook and passed him one by one until he found himself once more in his original post of rearguard.

It is to the Maori the most unlucky thing you can do to continue your journey should you meet a lizard on the way. It spells dire disaster to the man or woman who ignores the warning. So the Tuhua Maoris hastened back to their dwellings, thanking the gods that Ngatae had been permitted to see the " mokomoko " before any of them had passed it.

" Such a big lizard, too ! " cried one. " Ngatae says he has never seen such a monster."

" Koia ano ! " the others said. " Whatever would have happened to us if we had gone on ! "

And all that evening the talk was principally about lizards and the troubles they had wrought to unwary people.

However, on the morrow they made a fresh start, but with much diminished numbers, for many who were timorous or lazy stayed behind, which was just as well, as the accommodation at Taringamotu was somewhat limited. And perhaps this was what the lizard intended to convey !

Wahanui was once more hoisted upon his horse, which groaned horribly when the twenty-two stone weight was settled on its back. A camel would have been very useful to the wise counsellor.

Porou, on horseback, pushed his way rudely to the front, while his pretty wife Hinewhiu trudged in the rear, carrying her child slung on her back. Kongé's injured aunt walked ahead of her, nursing her grievances, and the rest of the

crowd straggled along all merry and bright, and full of chaff.

This time no lizard appeared to give them warning, so the party reached their destination quite happily, and, when the horsemen had dismounted just outside the Kaainga, all the visitors went forward slowly and solemnly towards the dwellers in Taringamotu. Ngatae went first, then Kongé, than Wahanui, and after him the rest of the guests in order of precedence. When they got near the others, they stood still in line with bowed heads.

All the people in the village were squatting, as is the custom of the Maoris when receiving guests. The women had leaves twined in their hair, and those who were chiefs among the people wore feathers of the " huia " bird above their ears. Only those of very high rank are allowed to don these feathers, which are black and white in colour, and the birds are preserved as much as possible, there being a scarcity of them.

As soon as the visitors had halted, a howl of grief went up from one old woman, which was immediately taken up by others, who eulogised departed relatives in between their mournful wails, shedding tears copiously the whole time. The visitors also wept.

Then came a speech of welcome from Whaterangi, followed by a few words from Ngatae, who, being hungry, cut the ceremony short by advancing towards Kahu and Whaterangi and " rubbing noses " with them, amidst shouts of " Naumai " (welcome) from the villagers. Then everyone on one side rubbed noses with everyone on the other side, all of them still crying. After which they suddenly brightened up, and started to talk and laugh together.

Then came pipes, followed by a tremendous feed of pork and birds of various kinds, with heaps of potatoes and a quantity of " puwha," or sowthistle. It took some time to digest all this, so it was well on in the evening when Ngatae stood up in the big " wharé runanga " (meeting-house) and introduced the subject of his son's intended marriage.

He put the matter very simply, merely announcing that Kongé having come to man's estate, it was necessary for him to take a wife, and Ngatae's wish was that that wife should be Amohaere, the adopted daughter of Whaterangi and Kahu. Then he sat down amid murmurs of applause.

Presently Whaterangi rose, looking tired and bored as usual, and was beginning to say something which he considered appropriate to the occasion, when he was pulled down by his wife Kahu, who forthwith made a flowery speech of welcome, followed by a song which was certainly not composed by a missionary. Her allusions to Kongé's fondness for the opposite sex were received with shouts of laughter from the crowd, and finally Kahu said that she personally was pleased to think that the young man wanted to marry her niece.

After this, Kongé was put through his catechism, which was as follows :

Had he any wives already ? None, said Kongé, with a sigh.

Had he any children ? The same answer was given.

Was he the son of Ngatae ? He believed so.

Did he want Amohaere for his wife ? Yes, he thought he did.

Would he always be true to his wife ? " Oh, yes," said Kongé. And the sky did not fall, but everyone laughed

derisively, except Moka, the aggrieved aunt, who scowled fiercely and muttered things under her breath.

After this, all the relatives had to be consulted, and as Kongé was son of the Paramount Chief, there was no difficulty in getting their unanimous consent.

Finally, Tohiora the witch-doctor stepped into the picture, and announced that he had consulted the gods, who were quite propitious.

So it merely remained for Kahu to formally give her consent, and for Ngatae to welcome Amohaere as his daughter-in-law, which he did in a charming little speech.

Then Kongé, who was really a good fellow at heart and not at all the fool he pretended to be, seeing that Amohaere looked depressed and tearful, called her to his side and sat with her hand in his while he told her how glad he was to win her for his wife.

Then there was more feasting, with speech-making and singing until far into the night—in fact, it was the most joyous wedding that had ever taken place in Taringamotu.

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CHAPTER VI

TROUBLE IN TAUMARUNUI

So Kongé and Amohaere became man and wife, and as the lizard did not show himself on their way back to Taumarunui, the tribe began to think that some happiness might be in store for the young couple.

Kongé smiled if anything more blandly than usual as the days went by, and his wife fell into the regular routine at her new home, which was much what she had been accustomed to all her life. She was away, however, from Kahu's jealous outbursts, and her position at Tamarunui was better than it had been at Taringamotu, as she was now daughter-in-law of the Paramount Chief of Tuhua. So that altogether it was a change for the better.

Ngatae, too, was very kind to her, often calling her to his side to sit down and tell him about the place she came from. He used to laugh heartily over her stories of Kahu's angling for male visitors and her rage when her advances were not appreciated.

"But what does her husband, Whaterangi, say to it all?" he asked.

"Oh! he says nothing," replied Amohaere. "He simply goes to sleep."

At this Ngatae laughed more than ever. "Truly, his name should have been 'Owl,'" he shouted, "for he spends more time in sleeping than waking."

"But then, perhaps, the Hawk might kill the Owl," giggled his daughter-in-law.

"So he would sleep for ever," agreed Ngatae.

But it was Aorere who became Amohaere's greatest friend. The two were almost inseparable, and both were alike in their fear of Ata, whose dislike for her daughter-in-law Amohaere seemed almost as great as her hatred of Aorere. For this there was no apparent reason, except that the two girls were fond of each other.

Ata had not given up her plot to dethrone Aorere from Ngatae's affections, and lost no opportunity of throwing out hints in the Chief's hearing of the girl having a lover whom she used to steal away to meet. She did not dare to accuse her outright for fear of Ngatae's wrath, seeing that she had no proof of the liaison; but she kept on hinting, until at last Ngatae could stand it no longer, and he determined to find out for himself what truth there was in the rumour.

So one hot summer's day, when the sun was high in the heavens and the whole village seemed to be hushed in slumber, Ngatae watched.

With the exception of a few children playing in the shade, the only people to be seen were Amohaere and Aorere sitting in the porch of Kongé's house, which backed on to the bush. The two girls were smoking while they talked in an undertone. Presently Kongé's wife yawned, stretched herself, stooped down and entered her dwelling.

Then Aorere rose quietly and lazily, looked round the village at the numerous huts in a sleepy way, tiptoed away

from where she had been sitting and slipped quickly and noiselessly into the bush at the back of the house.

Ngatae waited for a few minutes while he peered into his own abode to see if perchance any were awake. But all his three wives seemed to be slumbering. Indeed there was no mistake about two of them, for both were stretched on their backs, snoring loudly.

" Etii ano nei he poaka ! " (Just like pigs !) muttered the Chief. Ata was curled up near the doorway, with a blanket thrown over her, leaving just the top of her head visible.

" Three wives accounted for," muttered Ngatae. " Now to find the fourth and most precious."

With that he moved quietly away, crept round the backs of the huts, and strode across the fern until he struck the track by which Aorere had gone.

His bare feet made no noise as he moved quickly in the girl's wake. The way led eastward towards Matahamea ; it was not the main bridle-path, but merely a sort of pig-track, which eventually crossed the other about a mile away from the village.

When the Chief reached the junction, he halted and examined the ground to see which way his young wife had gone. Presently, being apparently satisfied, he followed on the pig-track with his eyes glued to the path. He was in the fern now, which grew to a height of four or five feet. On and on he went with hasty steps, until once more he came to bushland, where the ground started to rise gradually towards the hills which culminated in the Sacred Mountain. It was by this way his men had carried Moffatt's body to its burial, and Ngatae, suddenly remembering it, felt his blood turn colder. The man he had killed, though not by his own hand, had come this way a corpse ! Was it possible

that his spirit was even now near to the Chief? Ngatae shuddered and hurried on.

Presently, he heard low voices ahead of him, and, turning a sharp bend in the track, he came on Porou and Takirau arguing fiercely, but in subdued tones.

On seeing Ngatae, they started back guiltily, and cried out his name.

"What do ye here?" he asked.

"He aha mau?" (What is that to you?) snarled Porou.

"What brings you here?" repeated Ngatae.

"Pig hunting," replied Porou sullenly.

"Pig hunting without a gun or a dog?" queried Ngatae sarcastically.

"We had a dog when we started," lied the other glibly, "but the boar ripped him. Even now he lies dead on yonder ridge."

"Beware lest your tongue be ripped also," replied Ngatae; and, without another word, he turned on his heel and hurried back the way he had come.

It was quite evident Aorere had not come thus far, but where had she turned off? That was what worried the Chief, as he picked his way quickly through the bush.

He had left the trees behind, and was hastening through the fern, looking from side to side for an opening where the girl might have gone through, when suddenly he came face to face with Ata.

The woman clasped her hands, and stared wildly at her husband.

"What on earth has brought you here, woman?" he asked in great wonder. "Are you also hunting pigs without a dog or a gun, even as Takirau and Porou say they are doing up yonder?"

"I had a fancy to come this way," stammered his wife. "It is long since I took the road to the Sacred Mountain."

"Well, you had better take the road back now, lest the gods keep you in their dwelling-place," said Ngatae; and the woman turned obediently and retraced her steps. She and her husband travelled back by the main track as soon as they had struck it, and exchanged no words. But just before they reached Taumarunui the Chief said meaningly, "Those who follow me unasked seldom do so a second time." And his wife shuddered.

But the strangest part of it all was that when they got back to Ngatae's house, lo! Aorere sat there in the shade of the verandah, smoking peacefully.

"Anana!" she cried. "To think of you two journeying about for no reason in the heat of the day!"

And she laughed in Ata's face. At which the elder woman scowled, and muttered "Thou boiled head!" which is a Maori way of swearing.

So Ngatae, having gained no information by his tramp in the scorching sun, finally took counsel with Wahanui, and the great man, who was what the Maoris call a "tangata mohio"—that is, a man who knows a great deal—took his pipe out of his mouth and said, "Ask Amohaere."

The Chief, nothing loth, called his pretty daughter-in-law on one side at the first opportunity, and asked her what she knew of *l'affaire* Aorere.

Now, it is a well-known fact that Maori women cannot possibly keep a secret for more than about five minutes. Out it comes almost the moment after they hear it, and spreads like wildfire throughout the village. So that it was a matter of astonishment to Ngatae that Amohaere

professed ignorance of the whole matter, although the Chief could see she was bursting with information. To all queries she simply replied, " Aua " (I don't know).

" Why does Aorere go away alone ? " " Aua," said the girl.

" Where does she go to ? " Again it was " Aua."

" Oh ! Aua ! Aua ! Aua ! " shouted the Chief angrily. " Presently I will make you say ' Aué ' instead of ' Aua.' "

The word " Aué " means " Alas ! " and is used as a token of grief. So Ngatae thought to frighten the girl into answering his questions.

Instead, she only laughed in his face and said, " Oh ! no, you won't, O Ngatae," then swung on her heel and marched off, leaving the Chief in a state of rage mixed with amusement.

He looked after the girl as she strolled towards Kongé's house, humming to herself. Then she stooped down and entered the low doorway, whence her face again appeared with a mocking smile on it, which caused Ngatae to shake his fist at her.

. . . . . .

There was great excitement in Taumarunui that evening. Some Maoris, three in number, had canoed up the river from a village called Pipiriki with news of an expedition sent by the New Zealand Government to make a railway through the lands set apart for the Maoris of the King.

Great was the indignation of Ngatae and his people to find that the Government did not intend to keep its word regarding that portion of New Zealand which had been given to the Maoris in perpetuity by Queen Victoria.

The expedition, it appeared, had consisted of one white chief, with three or four whites of the workman class.

They had come into the Valley of the Manganui-a-te-ao, where dwelt a fierce tribe of natives called Patutokotoko. These had sent back the men, and taken the engineer prisoner, intending to kill him. Eventually, however, they had canoed down the Whanganui River, and left him there, with the assurance that he would be slain should he return.

All this was told by the three messengers, with many embellishments and fierce gestures, to Ngatae and his astonished people.

The Chief alone appeared calm amidst the babel of fierce voices. The whole crowd of several hundred natives were assembled in the " marae," or open space in the centre of the village, talking angrily and chanting war-songs.

Here and there a torch lit up savage faces with the blood-lust on them. Men, women and even children had thrown off all disguise, and appeared as their ancestors must have appeared to Captain Cook over a century before.

" Slay them ! Slay the white pigs ! The land belongs to the Maori, not to the pakeha ! "

A shot rang out, then another, and then a whole volley, followed by a howl of hatred.

Ngatae, who was sitting in front of his house, suddenly stood up, and was about to push his way through to the centre of the marae, when a hand clutched his arm.

" Who is that ? " he demanded sharply, peering through the semi-darkness into the face of the person who held him.

" It is I, Aorere," answered his young wife eagerly. " Do not go into the centre of the ring, O husband."

" Why not ? " asked the Chief angrily. " Am I not

ruler of these Maoris? Is it not meet that I should speak to my people?" And he shook her hand off roughly, and strode into the ring of bloodthirsty natives.

"O, my people!" he shouted, "listen to me! The white men have been and gone. Why, therefore, show fear and anger? Probably they will never return, for they now know that the Maoris want not them nor their railway."

"They will return," yelled a voice, "as sure as the sun will return to-morrow."

"Ae! Ae!" screamed the crowd. "They will come back. The pigs will return to be slain by us."

"They will die like Moffatt," cried one.

"Slay! Slay! Slay the cursed white man," howled the mob.

And again the war-chant rose, and a straggling volley was fired. Then Aorere, who was watching anxiously, saw Ngatae clap his hand to his left arm, and look angrily round. So she ran quickly and stood by his side, panting fiercely.

"Who was the coward who fired at Ngatae?" she cried, her voice ringing out clear in the sudden silence.

"Lo! Ngatae is wounded," shrieked a hag. At which there was a great tumult, as the people ran in round their Chief and called for vengeance on the man who fired the shot. Even Kongé shook off his apathy, and stalked swiftly through the outskirts of the crowd, peering fiercely into the faces of those who hung back, while he held his gun in readiness.

Then Ngatae cried out, "Lo! it was an accident; for no man of my tribe would dare to raise his hand against me. Disperse to your homes, O friends!"

So they gradually melted away in small groups, until no one was left in the marae save Ngatae and Aorere.

"It was no accident," said the girl bitterly to her husband.

"Me aha!" laughed Ngatae. "Anyhow, it is only a flesh wound."

PART II

MY STRUGGLE TO GET TO MAORILAND

CHAPTER VII

I AM TAKEN PRISONER

All that I have written down up to now I have learned from the Maoris of Tuhua, who dwell in and around Taumarunui, principally through my wife, Te Aitu, daughter of the woman Rata, Ngatae's cousin. She it is who has told me of happenings which I should not otherwise have heard of, and it is from her I have gathered my information regarding the thoughts and ways of the principal characters who figure in these pages.

In addition to her information, the advice and counsel which my wife has given me in troublous times has been invaluable. Her firmness and strength of character were doubtless inherited from the governing family from which she sprang.

However, to resume my story, which is really a tale of the blotting out of the Maoris as a separate race, in much the same way that the Saxons were wiped out as a nation and compelled to become Normans. Only, in this case the difference in colour made the transition doubly cruel to the conquered, and a race which preferred simply to exist rather than compete was compelled to come under the iron heel of a people whose motto is "Work or go under."

I had made a flying survey of about one hundred miles

of the proposed railway before I reached the Manganui-a-te-ao, a river which runs through the Waimarino Plains and afterwards becomes a raging torrent, which empties itself into the Whanganui River, and so eventually goes out to sea.

It had been comparatively plain sailing up to this point, as I had not heretofore been in the lands set apart for the Maoris by the Treaty of Waitangi. I had been turned back once by a hostile tribe, but had managed after they had gone to slip into the bush eastward of their trail, and so avoid them.

I was hoping I might pass across the Manganui Valley without being seen, but we emerged from the bush at a village which I afterwards learnt was called Ruakaka, or the Parrot's Nest.

Here we were at once seen by an old man and his wife, who had been left in charge while the rest of the inhabitants were out on a pig hunt. The old couple immediately lit an enormous bonfire, with plenty of green ferns on top to make much smoke, as a signal that strangers had arrived.

"You wait here," said the old man; "my people will soon come."

And in a short time they came running in and surrounded us. They were a fierce-looking crowd, filled with hatred and astonishment. They hated us because we were white men and therefore had no right in New Zealand, and they were astonished at our daring to enter their territory, especially with the intention of putting a railway through it.

These Maoris formed part of the Patutokotoko tribe, who are known as the Maori Highlanders, a savage, warlike race of proud bearing and good physique. In olden days they were continually engaged in fighting with their

neighbours, and they boast of never having been worsted in battle.

The Chief at Ruakaka was a suave-mannered Maori of middle age, with rather a pleasant way of talking, but I found out later that he was the most bloodthirsty man in the tribe. After having ascertained from me what my errand was, he consulted for a few minutes with his followers, and then politely told me to consider myself his prisoner.

" Your kaimahi (workmen)," he said, " can go back the way they came, but you must accompany us to our chief village of Papatupu, in order that we may determine your fate."

So it fell out that I found myself trudging down the valley of Manganui-a-te-ao, which means the " big river from the cloud," guarded sedulously by a score or so of dusky highlanders of the tribe of Patutokotoko.

It was a long and wearisome march, necessitating many crossings of the river and much scrambling along the faces of cliffs where we had to hang on to vines and roots to avoid rolling down to the river-bed, but the barefooted Maoris, with next to nothing on, negotiated the difficulties with ease bred of custom.

We rested on top of a high hill called Paturangi, whence we could see our destination, the village of Papatupu, which was what Maoris call a " Pa," meaning " fortified place," having a stockade round two sides of it and steep cliffs on the other two sides falling away to a depth of about two hundred feet down to the river.

Just before we reached the place my captors formed up in order of precedence, with my oily-mannered friend in front; behind him a young chief called Te Kuru, then

myself, and after me the others with place according to rank, the last one of all being an elderly man with Mongolian features and an entire absence of clothing. The day being sultry, he had stripped it off on top of Paturangi and carried it under his arm.

There was a tremendous "tangi" (weeping) as we entered, the women, who were decked out with leaves, howling themselves hoarse in an assumed agony of grief; then my captors pressed their noses against the noses of the Papatupu people, after which I was bundled into the wharé runanga, or assembly house, when the real business commenced.

After my chief captor, whose name I subsequently learnt was Tuatini, had explained how, when and where he had caught me, I was subjected to angry questionings by various members of the community, then I was searched for weapons, and finally I was taken out of the reeking house and put into a small hut in the centre of the village and told to stop there. After a time, two women brought me food and water, the food consisting as usual of pork and potatoes.

The next day I was taken back to the wharé runanga, where I had to listen to inflammatory speeches and warlike chants until late in the evening. With two exceptions, all the speakers were in favour of killing me outright, the two with milder views wishing to make a slave of me.

My breakfast and dinner each day became more and more like a feast, the Maoris trying to tempt my appetite with savoury dishes of eels, birds and other delicacies, in addition to the pork and potatoes. I thought it was very kind of them to treat a prisoner so handsomely, until a few days later I heard some children who were continually peering in at me say to each other, "Lo! the pakeha is getting

fat. Soon it will be time to kill him," which made me think seriously of my position, and I determined to try to escape.

There was no doubt about it: I was within an ace of being murdered and eaten by this fierce Hauhau tribe!

They were savages to the core, and would think no more of killing me and transferring me, in convenient portions, to their underground ovens than they would of sticking a pig and cooking it.

I learnt, some time afterwards, from a cannibal epicure, that human flesh and that of the pig are very similar in flavour, so there would have been no difficulty as regards the culinary process, and probably "Roast Pakeha" would have proved quite an ordinary dish to the dwellers in Papatupu, and needed no special seasoning.

But it was an appalling thought that, at any moment, my captors might appear, armed with whatever horrible weapons they usually employ to do their fiendish business, and put an end to my existence. It would be useless for me to defy them any longer when their minds were thoroughly made up, and quite hopeless to attempt to defend myself against an armed mob of bloodthirsty savages. My only hope was that when it did come, the end might be mercifully quick.

It would be easy for them to slay me at any time during the day; but at night, when I slept, the ghastly deed would be quite simple.

So I dreaded nightfall very greatly, and finally determined to make an attempt to escape before I slept again.

But, before I made any effort in that direction, I went back to the wharé runanga and told the Maoris again in impressive language that, if they killed me, another man

would take my place, as the New Zealand Government was determined to complete its work.

"Let him come!" they cried. "We will kill him also!"

"Then the Queen's soldiers will come and avenge us," I answered.

"They will go back quicker than they came," jeered Tuatini. "The Patutokotoko tribe have never been beaten in battle. Besides, your soldiers would never succeed in reaching here. No white man has ever set foot in Manganui-a-te-ao until now; the way is too difficult for him."

Then the Head Chief, Rangiora by name, told me to hold my tongue, as I had no say in the matter.

"You are our prisoner," he said, "and we will decide what to do with you without further interference."

Seeing that it was useless to argue any longer, I left them and strolled round the limits of the "pa" to try and find a loophole of escape when darkness came. My every movement was watched quietly but effectively, and I could see that it would be useless for me to try to get away on foot through the valley I had travelled down. The only way I could think of was to slip down the steep path the Maoris had made to the river, where their canoes were drawn up on the bank. Provided this path were not watched, there was just a chance of my escaping if my canoe were not dashed to pieces on the rocks.

So that night, when all was quiet, I stole out of my hut and made for the place where the track fell away suddenly down to the landing-place. There was no moon, but the night was not too dark to prevent my seeing the different huts as I passed them. There were six of these between me and my goal, and I got by five of them unchallenged,

but, as I was creeping past the sixth, a man's voice said in Maori, "Where are you going, white man?" and two armed stalwart natives came out from the doorway of the house and stood before me.

It was said very quietly, and I answered just as quietly, though my heart beat fast.

"Nowhere in particular," I replied; "but I could not sleep, so I came out for a walk."

"You must go back to your wharé, O Para," they said, for that was my name in Maori. "We will return with you."

So we went quietly back, and the two men waited until they were satisfied I was in bed, then they left me to my thoughts.

Whether the two believed what I told them about sleeplessness or not, I do not know, but I heard no more of the episode, and everyone the next day was too excited about some fresh arrivals from down the river to bother about asking questions. Anyhow, I was very thankful the two guards had seen me, for in the evening I was sent for by Rangiora and informed that the tribe had resolved to spare my life this time, but if ever I ventured to return I should surely die at their hands.

"Be ready at daybreak," he concluded. "We are going to take you down the River Whanganui to a place near the town of that name, where we will leave you."

Their sudden decision in my favour surprised me greatly, as I never thought for a moment that my life would be spared; but I learnt long afterwards from Te Aitu that it was on the strong advice of the visitor to Papatupu that day that I was released. He was a chief of considerable standing and intelligence, and impressed on Rangiora and the other

chiefs the advisability of allowing me to return to the white man's town, so that I could inform the Government of the great objection the Maoris had to the railway being forced on them. So his opinion was endorsed by the others, and I was set free.

As soon as the inhabitants of Papatupu heard that I was not to be slaughtered, their whole demeanour changed. The women and children and a few of the men crowded into my hut and bombarded me with questions, cracking jokes with me and laughing in the most delightful manner. They were like a new people ; all signs of animosity had gone and their sullen looks had given place to merry smiles. They even went so far as to say they were sorry I was leaving them ! Yet a few hours before they had been anticipating my sudden demise with gloomy satisfaction.

CHAPTER VIII

AM DRIVEN BACK

About ten men were told off to canoe me down the river, with a helmsman called Winiata.

The River Manganui was low, showing its teeth all the way down, so that there was almost constant danger of a capsize or of the canoe being dashed to pieces against a rock. The men were as cool as possible, and the steersman was splendid. One minute we were going like an express train through boiling masses of foam with just sufficient channel for us to squeeze between the rocks; then gliding gently through a still reach, with Winiata craning his neck to find the best spot to plunge into the next rapids.

"Akina! Akina!" (Dash on!) he would yell when there was danger of our grounding on top of the falls, and when there was not sufficient room to turn the canoe he would shout an order to the crew, who would spring out into the water and swing the craft round, afterwards climbing in easily to resume their machine-like paddling.

About two miles of this torrent brought us to the Whanganui River—the New Zealand Rhine, as it is termed—the haunting beauty of which it is impossible to describe. In these lower reaches of the river it is bounded on either side by immense cliffs, with here and there a break disclosing

to view a cluster of native huts huddled together on green patches of land. Above them all tower lofty ranges of hills clothed with dense bush.

In some of the still reaches of the river the grandeur of the scenery can scarcely be surpassed, and the weird chant with which my escort sometimes accompanied their strokes, echoing from cliff to cliff, made up an effect which will linger in the memory for all time.

Fruit grows in abundance in this district, principally peaches, and, as the orchards are on top of the cliffs, the natives make ladders of vines as a means of ascent and descent.

Our journey down was uneventful. We touched at all the principal villages for my captors to explain matters, and where we did not stop they called out the news to excited-looking little figures on top of the cliffs, whose replies mostly consisted of " Koia ano ! "

We spent three days and two nights going down to the place where my escort landed me. They then wasted a little time telling me I was a " stone " which the Government had flung at them, and which they now flung back. They also informed me I was a " bird " sent to Manganui-a-te-ao to eat the Maoris' berries, adding that if I flew there again I should be shot. Then they turned their canoe and paddled back, while I walked in the other direction a free man!

This is only a short account of what befell the Maoris in the " King Country " during my four years' sojourn in their land. Suffice it, therefore, to say that about a month later I returned to Papatupu with a canoe load of friendly natives, who did not at all relish the idea of facing the Patutokotoko tribe, but were tempted by high wages. I refused the Government offer of an armed white escort, as I did not want to precipitate a conflict. As for myself,

I often wonder, even now, how I escaped with my life, not only on this occasion as well as previously, but very many times after, for the Maoris must have hated me for my work with a very bitter hatred.

It took several days to pole upstream to the junction of the rivers, and we had quite a nasty time getting our canoe up the Manganui-a-te-ao, but it was nothing to the time we had when we arrived at Papatupu.

The village was simply crowded with semi-naked warriors, who had apparently gone mad with rage. They had their war-paint on, and carried guns or spears, while they moved about restlessly and aimlessly, like cattle in a stock-yard.

We squatted down just inside the palisade and listened for an hour or more to threatening speeches made by sundry chiefs from the surrounding villages. Each of these men started to run towards me from about twenty yards distance, shouting defiance as he came, and finishing up with a bucking jump as he planted his feet with a thud about three feet away from me. Then he trotted back, concocting some fresh sentence to yell out as he came at me again.

About ten or twelve of these warriors having exhausted their vocabulary, it merely remained for the Head Chief to show his hate and agility. He wore only a couple of little flax garments, about the size of pocket-handkerchiefs, tied round his waist, and as it was a windy day, he might just as well have left them at home. When he had finished his last buck-jump he screamed at me in a frenzy of rage, and flung a fire-stick at my feet, which I knew to be the Maori way of declaring war. Then he shouted at me, " If you cross Paturangi, you shall die," and trotted off.

I waited about half an hour, wondering what would happen next, while my friendlies jabbered uneasily among themselves, when, to my astonishment, every living soul of the tribe walked out of the village towards Paturangi, the lofty hill a mile or two east of Papatupu.

Men, women and children streamed across the plain in the direction of the hill, the men carrying their weapons and the women babies and blankets.

When they had all disappeared, the quiet was uncanny. Not a sound was to be heard save the muffled roar of the rapids below and the ceaseless chirping of cicadas in the bush across the river.

They had been gone some ten minutes when one of my friendlies broke the silence by saying slowly and emphatically, "Ehara i te hanga!" which means "This is most extraordinary!"

Another one turned to me and said, "It means death if we go on. Let us return to our homes, O Para." And the others agreed eagerly, for they were afraid.

But I, being of a stubborn nature, determined to follow on to Ruakaka, for my object was to reach the plains beyond that village, which was where I thought my railway must pass through.

So, after making some sort of a meal, we marched off in the wake of the Patutokotoko tribe. Having climbed the famous hill, Paturangi, the scene of many a battle, we descended the eastern side without being molested in any way, and found ourselves in the evening at a small deserted village above the river, where we stayed the night, taking it in turns to keep watch. We had only the north side to guard, as on the other sides there was an almost precipitous cliff falling away to the ravine-bed.

I remember a strange thing happening that evening just before the daylight quite gave out and gave place to a full moon. I was keeping guard at the extreme east end of the village, on the side where the enemy lay, when I heard the pit-pat of naked feet coming quickly from that direction. Nearer and nearer they came, until presently I could make out the form of a small man running fast towards me.

When he was quite near, I stepped out in the middle of the track and called out quietly in Maori, " Who is that ? "

" I am Raukawa, of the Patutokotoko tribe," a panting voice replied. " I have come to warn you."

" Come close," I answered, " and let me see you."

So he shuffled up near to me and looked me full in the face, when I recognised him as one who had kept rather in the background at Papatupu and had made no speeches, from which I concluded he was not a chief. He had tremulous lips and only one eye.

He was very much in earnest on this occasion, and told me that his people were making ball-cartridges wherewith to kill me on the morrow, should I proceed. He begged me to go back, and altogether seemed quite a decent old Maori and much concerned for my safety.

I told him I must go on, and explained to him that if I fell another Goverment man would quickly take my place.

So he trotted back, muttering to himself, " Aué ! Aué ! "

My conscience often smites me when I remember the curt way I dismissed poor old Raukawa, for I learnt long afterwards that some of his own sentries caught him as he was trying to steal back into Ruakaka, and accused him of " having communication with the enemy." They shot him at dawn, in spite of the pleading of his daughter.

So the old man had sacrificed his life in an effort to save mine, and I had treated him as a spy.

We went on after breaking our fast as soon as the sun was up. It was a toilsome journey up the river, which we had to cross several times, in addition to performing many acrobatic feats in places where goats could not have made progress. I led the way, as I was the only one who knew it, having been marched down it before as a prisoner.

It was well on in the afternoon before we reached the hill which overlooked Ruakaka. Here we halted, just out of sight of the enemy, while my friendlies went through some sort of a service which sounded like the multiplication table. Then two of them disappeared in the bush alongside, from which they presently emerged grotesquely smeared with red and black streaks and daubs of some sort of dye which they got from the bark of trees, making them look fantastically hideous.

Then, putting out their tongues and rolling their eyes, they danced forward towards the enemy. I followed close on their heels, with the rest behind looking rather scared.

As soon as the hostile warriors sighted us, they started firing in our direction, but not one of us was hit, though the bullets whistled round us in close proximity, cutting through the fern and manuka scrub on either side. They fired several volleys as we moved down the slope towards them, our naked vanguard dancing ahead with defiant jumps and horrid contortions. They seemed to have cast off timidity with their garments.

When we were near the foot of the hills we halted and sat down. The enemy, who were drawn up in two lines and daubed with patches of paint, laid down their guns, and for the space of a minute there was complete silence.

Suddenly out dashed Rangiora, the enemy's chief, with huia feathers in his hair and a long spear in his hand, and, giving a yell of rage, he commenced to run up and down the ranks of his people, working himself and the tribe up to a pitch of frenzy. In perfect time, the warriors stamped the ground and beat their breasts, with their eyes hideously rolling and their tongues lolling out in derision. They looked like fiends from hell, wound up by machinery. The ground seemed to shake beneath their tread, and each time their hands struck their breasts there was a report like a hundred stock-whips being cracked at once.

And all this time the warrior chief danced up and down the ranks, chanting the war-song of his people, and every now and again the whole tribe would join in, as one man, with a guttural yell of horrid hate.

When the dance was over the Maoris dispersed to their huts, and I moved down to the flat ground, followed by my friendlies. After a little time Rangiora and Tuatini came out in turn and harangued me, again asserting their determination never to allow the railway to be brought into Maoriland. I, in turn, told them what I had already told them before at Papatupu ; and as I sat down a howl of rage went up from the village, the shrill voices of women being mingled with the hoarse cries of the warriors.

Afterwards some women brought a kind of gruel in bowls, which they put down before us, and, when we had devoured it, they ran in and fetched the bowls.

Presently a procession emerged from the village, consisting of women and girls, each carrying a small square basket, cunningly fashioned of flax. In these baskets were presents of tobacco and corn. At the head of the women were three or four young chiefs in full war-paint, almost naked, and

carrying spears, which they kept on flinging in the air and catching dexterously as they fell, while they leapt along mostly backwards or sideways, with their faces twisted out of all shape, their eyes showing nothing but white, and their tongues lolling out of their mouths.

The procession first passed us at a little distance, then wheeled round and passed us again quite close, and, as each girl danced by, she put down her basket at my feet and sped on behind the leaders.

It was a very pretty sight, and I wondered what it meant, but my friendlies soon enlightened me.

"It means death, O Para," they told me, explaining that prisoners were always propitiated with presents before being killed.

When night fell we rigged up a fire-fly over us, as some small protection from the dew, and there we waited through the darkness, with not much sleep among us.

At daybreak Rangiora, with six or eight more warriors, came down to us from the village, armed with guns.

And Rangiora said fiercely to me, "Lo! O Para, we have warned you back twice. Now we will shoot you unless you return at once."

So there was nothing for it but to wend our way back, which we did sadly and wearily.

The enemy posted scouts all the way down the river to Papatupu to make sure we were really going. No matter which way we looked we saw a warrior standing motionless, gun in hand, ready to fire should we turn in our tracks.

But my friendlies were all anxiety to get home to their wives and children, and, even if I had wished it, they would not have retraced their steps towards Ruakaka. It meant certain death to go back, and a dead man is no use to anyone.

CHAPTER IX

THE KNIFE MISSES ITS MARK

I WAS glad to shake the dust of Papatupu off my feet, and I have never been to the village since. The place always gave me the impression of a "trap" at the mouth of the Manganui-a-te-ao valley, down which valley the quarry was driven through the rough, uncultivated fern country into the cul-de-sac where dwelt Rangiora and his savage followers. For this reason I considered it undesirable as a place of residence, in spite of its rugged beauty.

The Patutokotoko tribe, too, were unlike any other body of Maoris I have met. They were coarser and rougher in their manner and appearance—more savage all through than any other tribe I have come across. So I was not sorry to leave them, and I have no doubt they were glad to get rid of me.

My canoe journey down the Whanganui River was much pleasanter on this occasion than on the last, when I was a prisoner. At all the places where we stayed the natives were most hospitable and gave us as much pork and potatoes as we could eat, listening eagerly to the account of our adventures as told by my friendlies.

The Maori tongue spoken south of Tuhua is very different from that of the natives in the north. The

Whanganui people talk in a guttural way and are very shaky with their " h's " ; whereas those who live in the Auckland district speak the pure Maori, which is delightful to listen to. Every word in the language ends with a vowel, the accent is similar to the Italian, and there are no sibilants, so it is easy for people at a great distance from each other to carry on a conversation.

As soon as I reached the bright little town of Whanganui, I sent off a long telegram of explanations to the Government, and the result was a visit to Wellington—the city of eternal wind.

For that matter, it blows almost continually everywhere in New Zealand, the only exception I know of being a place called Reefton in the South Island, where it never blows, but instead they have nine months rain out of the twelve.

On my way back to Maoriland I was fortunate enough to engage the services of a man called Hardy, who had worked for me many times before, and was the best chainman I ever had. I also re-engaged as cook a fellow called Tovey, who hailed from Bath. Hardy, too, was an Englishman, which was a great advantage, for the born Colonial is everlastingly on the " grouse." However, I picked up a couple of them on my way—Baynes and Rogers—and very good men they were too, so long as everything went smoothly.

I started into the bush from the same place as before, and this time steered by compass so as to fetch out a good way above Ruakaka, and after encountering great hardships through want of food and having to cut our way through virgin forest, we emerged eventually at a native village on the Waimarino plain, where the Chief was a tall, thin, elderly man of aristocratic appearance, called Peehi Turoa, and here we pitched our tents and rested.

The Maoris at this place were, for the most part, a jolly set of people, and did not seem to bother their heads much about the projected railway.

"I don't suppose it will be here in my time, Para," said the Chief; "probably never at all, as your Government are always short of money."

It was essential that I should procure some native carriers from this place to take with me into Tuhua, as there was a long stretch of bush land to travel through, and unknown country at that. But the Waimarino natives absolutely refused to go, and even if the men had been willing, their womenkind objected very strongly to their male belongings risking their lives by going amongst a strange people, especially the Tuhua tribe, who had always been their sworn enemies. Besides, there was a mystery attached to Ngatae's land: no one knew much about it or its inhabitants. They dwelt in the heart of Maoriland proper and were numerous and powerful, defying everyone and not hesitating to kill if their rights were infringed on, as witness the murder of Moffatt quite recently.

So I spent much time in Waimarino, completing my work up to that point, and trying to persuade the men to come with me into the King Country, as the Maoriland proper was called, being nominally ruled over by King Tawhiao.

"We will not come with you, O Para," said the natives to me. "Ngatae will surely slay you if you set foot in Tuhua, and probably he will kill us also."

That was their answer day after day, and I got very tired of coaxing them.

Then a thing happened which annoyed me much at the time, but which turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

The Maoris are a very jealous race where their women are

concerned, and I was always careful to avoid any risk of trouble by mixing up in their domestic affairs. And one evening when I had joined a merry group of natives who were squatting round a fire chattering and laughing, a pretty young married woman called Makaré stole up out of the darkness and sat down next to me, although there was scarcely room enough for her to squeeze in. Immediately after, I heard the woman on the other side of me say to her neighbour, " Makaré takes good care to sit next to Para " ; and her neighbour grunted out, " Ae ! she always does, for great is her longing for him."

And Makaré's husband heard what was said, for as I got up to go away I saw him standing behind his wife, scowling fiercely.

He was a miserable, sickly-looking man, whom the Maoris called Te Ngéné, which means " The Scrofulous," and it struck me then that I had seen him several times looking at me as if he would like to murder me, but I had put it down to the railway business.

So I mentioned it to Hardy, who apparently knew all about it, for he said he had overheard the women chaffing Makaré about me in front of her husband, whose temper had thereby been roused.

" I would not trust that man a yard, sir," added Hardy. " These sickly people are always imagining evil where there is none, and he will do you harm if he gets the chance."

" Well, he has no reason to, Hardy," I said. " I did not even know his wife's name until to-night, and I don't believe I have spoken two words to her."

" I know that, sir," said my chainman ; " but nothing you said would ever persuade Te Ngéné that the women's chaff is not true."

" Then he can do the other thing," I said sharply, as I

sauntered over to the wharé runanga, where I found Peehi with his two wives and several others smoking and talking.

" Naumai ! " they shouted when I entered, which means " Welcome ! " and I gave them greeting in return.

I squatted down on one of their flax mats and joined in the talk. Peehi had two wives living, one elderly and the other quite young and only recently married. He told me his brother Topia Turoa had four wives, and " could do with as many more," he added with a laugh.

" Ae ! he could do with a fresh one every moon," snorted a woman.

" Like the kings I have heard of in your Bible, O Para, with as many wives as there are leaves on a totara tree," said the Chief. Then he asked me jokingly why I did not take women from his tribe instead of men into Tuhua. " They would go fast enough if you asked them, Para."

This produced a chorus of disapproval from the female element present, save one called Ngawai, a pretty girl, full of laughter.

" I will come, O Para," she cried gaily. " Just you and I together."

" E pai ana ! " shouted Peehi, meaning " It is good ! "

But the other women, being somewhat jealous, said she had better make love to Topi (as they called Tovey) and travel with him.

This brought a scream of horror from Ngawai. " Topi te Porangi ! " she cried, as if that were the limit. " Engari kahore ! " (But no !)

" Porangi " is the Maori word for " lunatic," which the Maoris all insisted poor Tovey was. And certainly he was a bit " peculiar," as his mates asserted, and they subjected him to much chaff, which he rather relished than otherwise. He knew nothing of the Maori language, and his frequent

attempts at love-making produced howls of derision from the women. He was a middle-aged man, with the heart of a young one, and the work he put in was extraordinary. It was often wrong, but he did his best.

In addition to him and Hardy, Rogers and Baynes, I employed as packman an Irish Colonial named Tom Casey, an excellent hand with horses and one who had mixed much among Maoris, whose language he spoke fluently, though not, of course, grammatically.

What I still wanted was my small native contingent of five or six men, to cut and carry, and Hardy agreed with me on that point as we talked in my tent that evening.

I was lying back on my bed on the ground, with Hardy squatted facing me at my side, when I thought I noticed a faint rustling at the back of my head, outside the tent; and I was just going to ask Hardy if he heard it, when, to my astonishment, he sprang at me and hurled me over on my face.

At the same moment the back of the tent was ripped, and a knife was plunged up to the hilt in the very spot where my chest had been a few seconds before!

Then Hardy released me, and ran out shouting, "Ngéné for a fiver!" and I after him for all I was worth, cursing the scrofulous beast.

I saw Hardy's legs disappearing across the Waimarino plain, and followed him at full speed. The Maoris are not fast runners, so it was not long before I heard Hardy calling out, "I've got him, sir!"

When I reached them I found Te Ngéné on his face, with Hardy kneeling on him, holding his wrists.

"I am just going to strap his hands behind him with my belt, if you will hold the beggar for a minute," said he; and in another minute or so we had him secured.

Then we told him what we thought of him, but he did not reply, so we marched him back to my tent, intending to let him go when I had talked seriously to him.

But to our astonishment, when we entered the tent with our prisoner, there sat Peehi Turoa, motionless, looking at the knife which still stood in the middle of my bed.

As we went in, pushing Te Ngéné before us, the Chief looked fixedly at each one of us ; then he asked me, pointing to the knife, " Who did that, O Para ? "

And I answered simply, " Te Ngéné, O Chief ! But he was not thinking when he did it. It is nothing."

" At the dawn of day he shall die," said Peehi.

But I implored him not to kill the man, as he had done no murder, and it was only love for his wife which had made him jealous without reason.

Then Ngéné spoke for the first time, saying, " You lie, O Para, when you say ' without reason,' for Makaré's love for you is greater than the love of a woman for her firstborn child."

" Peace ! son of a slave," shouted Peehi, and as he spoke the flaps of the tent opened, and Makaré entered !

Her eyes took in everything and everybody. Then she asked me the same question the Chief had asked me, and in the same passionless voice, as she pointed to the knife : " Who did that, O Para ? "

And I replied to her as I had to the other, " Te Ngéné, O Makaré ! But he was not thinking when he did it. It is nothing."

" Not thinking ! " she echoed scornfully ; " then it is I who will make him think."

Like a flash she had the knife out of the ground and sprang at Te Ngéné to stab him. I seized her round the waist, while Hardy grasped her right arm, and so we

struggled for a minute or more before we could overcome her, for the girl was powerfully built and her anger made her stronger.

At last she lay panting on my fern bed with the two of us holding her arms, and with the knife lying harmless behind me.

Then I glanced at Peehi Turoa, who was sitting calmly in exactly the same place, and looking, I thought, rather bored.

"Let her go," he said quietly. "Her anger was just and drove her mad; but now it has passed, and she will do no more harm."

So we released the woman, who stood up stiffly under the ridge-pole of the tent, then suddenly asked, "Where is Te Ngéné?"

Hardy and I looked round quickly to where our prisoner had stood, but he had vanished.

"Where is my husband, O Peehi?" repeated the girl.

"He has gone from here," replied the Chief simply, "and will not return to Waimarino." Then he strode out, followed by Makaré.

So the name of Ngéné became "tapu" among the Maoris of Waimarino, but I heard long after that he had settled down among the natives of Lake Taupo, who were a branch of the same tribe Peehi ruled over.

No Maori will be abroad alone in the dark, so Te Ngéné must have hidden in a hut after he left my tent until the day broke, before leaving the place. We found Hardy's strap a short distance away from the tent, so he managed to wriggle out of that before he fled.

I kept the knife as a souvenir. I noticed it was very sharp and well pointed.

CHAPTER X

A MERRY MAORI MAIDEN

TUATINI and a dozen of his braves rode in from Ruakaka the next day and were shut up with Peehi Turoa for an hour or more. I guessed they were discussing me and my hated work and trying to persuade the Waimarino Chief to join them in their opposition to the railway, and it turned out I was right, for Peehi sent for me while they were there and explained matters.

The men of Ruakaka barely returned my greeting, as they considered I had played them a nasty trick. As a matter of fact, they had been half expecting me to return to Papatupu, and had prepared a " warm welcome " for me there !

When they learnt I had given them the go-by they were very angry, and now they had come to Waimarino to induce Peehi Turoa to either send me back or kill me—preferably the latter.

Peehi was sitting bolt upright when I went in, with a cynical smile on his face. He had a wife on each side of him, and others of his tribe were grouped around.

" Sit down, Para," he said, " and hear what Tuatini has to say."

So Tuatini, with the smile which I hated still on his face, stood up and spoke.

" Lo ! O Para," he began, " we have warned you back twice, and we have told you you would be slain should you return to our country. Now you have come in through the land over which Peehi Turoa rules, and we have come here to ask him to prevent your completing your work for the Government. With him now rests the question of life or death. I have spoken." And he sat down.

Then Peehi, after taking thought, asked me, " Supposing I turn you back now, Para, what will you do ? "

" I will come back again, O Peehi," I answered. " As many times as you send me back, so many times will I return."

" Then supposing now I kill you," went on Peehi, " what do you think will happen ? "

" If you kill me, Peehi," I replied, " another white man will be sent here in my place, and probably soldiers with him ; and not only that, but the man who takes on my work will be a man who does not care for the Maoris as I do, and through him you will lose your lands."

" Ae, you are right, O Para," said the Chief. " Therefore, O Tuatini, my word to you is this : I will not slay this white man, neither will I send him back to Poneke (Wellington), for he is a true friend to the Maori race, and it is no use for us to try oppose the white man's Government, for it is too strong. We are only like a little dog barking at a big one which can swallow us without difficulty. That is all I have to say, O men of Manganui-a-te-ao."

" The little dog can seize the big dog by the throat and bite deep until he dies," retorted Tuatini. " Anyhow, it is better to die fighting than to be swallowed alive."

And the others of his tribe agreed noisily, as they rose to return to their village with sorrow in their hearts.

There was dead silence after they had gone for the space of two or three minutes, and the faces of the Maoris round me were gloomy. I could see that they agreed with all that Tuatini had said, and that they would like to be well rid of me.

"How many men do you want from here to take into Tuhua?" suddenly asked Peehi.

"Four or five," I answered.

"They will be ready for you to-morrow," he said sharply, and gave an order to a man who immediately went out to fetch the five who were to go with me.

"Aué! Aué!" I heard the women wail, "they go to certain death." But they went on with their weaving, which they do most beautifully, fashioning mats and garments out of flax. They stretch the first rope they plait along the side of the hut, and fasten on to it other smaller ropes to hang down the length they require. The flax leaf, which is very long, grows a bright green colour, but when it is stripped it is yellow inside and almost white in the centre. So they blend these colours charmingly, adding others which they obtain from barks of trees, and before they fix on any fresh strip, they make it very soft and pliable by rolling it backwards and forwards on their naked thighs, as they squat there cross-legged.

The whole process is, of course, slow and tedious, some mats taking as long as two or three years to make, but the result is very beautiful, and they sometimes sell them for good prices, to be sold again to rich "globe-trotters" for big sums of money.

The Maoris receive any rents due to them through the Government at the Land Courts, but they can never be called rich, so any little extra money earned is appreciated

by them when they are in need of blankets or clothing. But they "take no thought for the morrow," and are as happy as the day is long. They have no rent or taxes to pay, the only collector who comes their way being Death, and him they do not fear. As long as the potato crop is not a failure there is always plenty to eat, and there are wild pigs and birds in the bush and eels in the streams, besides young sprouts of fern, which they call "piko piko," growing wild, and many other makeshifts.

So the Maoris are perfectly happy living their own lives. Wolsey's advice to Cromwell would be thrown away on them, for they do not know the meaning of the word Ambition, and if they did they would shun it as the plague.

I could see Peehi was anxious to pass me on to Ngatae. Tuatini's visit, coming so soon after the Te Ngéné affair, had worried him somewhat, and he wanted to resume his *dolce far niente* existence.

The five Maoris told off to accompany me were filled with fear, which their wives made worse by their bitter lamentations. The women were coming with us on our first day's journey, intending to sleep the night at the camp, and return the next day to Waimarino. This they insisted on doing, though I could see no good in it.

Ngawai turned up when we were starting with a bundle on her back, and announced her intention of accompanying us.

"What ever for?" I asked her.

"Just to keep the devils away, O Para," she giggled.

"Yes, me and you together!" said Tovey, struggling with a camp-oven tied round his neck with flax, and which would take the place of his tie.

" Ugh ! " shuddered the girl. " Kei te porangi nei ! " (Listen to this lunatic !).

" What does ' porangi ' mean, sir ? " asked Tovey.

So I said it meant a " funny fellow," which pleased him vastly. Anyhow Ngawai kept us amused as our procession trailed along over the tussock plain and plunged into the bush. The going, of course, was slow, and, as we had started late, we had not travelled a great way before we had to pitch camp.

The five Maori men and their wives were somewhat melancholy after supper, but brightened up when Hardy and the others started singing choruses. Then Tovey sang " Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," which he considered his masterpiece, twice running, with his gooseberry eyes fixed on Ngawai.

This was too much for the girl, so she changed her seat and came and snuggled up against me where she could not see the " boiled head of a porangi," as she called him.

" Only owls sing at night, O Para," she whispered, " when people want to go to sleep."

The next morning, after we had breakfasted, the women returned to their village, after rubbing noses with their husbands and bidding them a most tearful farewell.

Ngawai insisted on going through the same ceremony with me, and cried bitterly when she said " Good-bye " !

Of course, there is no such thing as " rubbing noses " among the Maoris. They call it " Hongi," and it consists of two people clasping right hands and placing the sides of their noses together and keeping them in that position for a few seconds. They usually make mournful sounds while they do it.

CHAPTER XI

INTO THE LION'S DEN

After the departure of the women we buckled to and made our way northward by compass to strike the land of Tuhua. Casey had managed with help to get the horses through to Waimarino, so we started from there with enough bacon and flour, as we thought, to carry us through and to spare.

But I had not reckoned on the task being so difficult, as, in addition to cutting our way through dense undergrowth, I had to worry about my heights, in order to find a suitable route for the projected railway.

The appetites of the men, too, seemed to get bigger as the food diminished, so that some time before we emerged from the bush we were on very limited rations. Hardy was invaluable here, as he took no notice of complaints, but calmly handed out the allowances twice a day with a cheerful face and a merry tongue which Mark Tapley might have envied.

"Here you are, gentlemen," he would say to Baynes and Rogers, as he gave them their allowance of biscuits: "steak-and-kidney pudding, large portions, with 'Colonial goose' to follow." He knew Tovey hailed from Somerset, so he always told him he had a "nice Bath chap coming, with cider to wash it down." Even the gloomy Maoris smiled at the fanciful description he gave of their meagre

portions of food. "Ka kata, ka koa," they would say, which means "He laughs, he is glad," and is their usual way of describing a cheery person.

So we managed somehow, until one day we came out into the open country of Tuhua. It was a beautiful scene which met our eyes. Down below us, a short distance away, was the Whanganui River, even here about one hundred and fifty yards wide, and beyond were terraces on end of fern land, culminating in a mighty range of hills in the centre of which towered Maungatapu, the Sacred Mountain.

It was awe-inspiring, and the complete absence of life or sound made it seem like a huge picture we had been called on to view, but in which we had no concern.

We stood silent for some time, when a Maori suddenly touched me on the shoulder and pointed west down the river.

"He au ahi!" he said. And sure enough a column of smoke shot up some miles distant, showing that our arrival was known to Ngatae.

"Well, come on," I said; "let us face the music." And we walked down to the river's edge.

Here the Maoris demurred at crossing, saying that death awaited us on the other side. Tovey and the two Colonials were hanging back too; so, seeing that a crisis had arisen, I got Hardy to help me cut a couple of stout poles from some bushes near by. Then Hardy taking the lower end of one and myself the upper, we put Tovey in the middle and waded in. Baynes and Rogers took the other pole between them, and we all five got across the river, though with considerable difficulty, as the current was very swift, and Tovey lost his head by looking at the water instead of keeping his eyes glued to the opposite bank.

The five Waimarino natives, seeing I was determined, followed our example, and waded over with practised ease.

We shook ourselves, lit our pipes, and trudged on down the river by a regular Maori track. Less than two miles down we came to a small village, through which we had perforce to pass between two rows of huts. There was no smoke issuing from the place—no sign of life whatever. Here, again, the Maoris absolutely refused to proceed.

"They will shoot us from the huts, O Para," they said fearfully. "It is a trap laid for us."

Baynes and Rogers agreed with them, and Tovey was heard to mutter that he wished he were back in Bath.

"Well, I'm going," I said.

"And I'll come with you, sir," announced Hardy.

So the two of us went towards the lines of huts, myself leading. It was rather funny to see Hardy, before we started, cram his hat well down, get his pipe in full blast, and then swagger after me, humming the "British Grenadiers." Dear chap! He was the stuff of which Englishmen are made.

We got through all right, without any appearance of hurry, for if we had to die we wished to do it with our chins up.

When we had won to the far end of the village, the others for very shame's sake had to follow. They started majestically, led by Baynes and Rogers, but half-way through the scream of a kiwi frightened them, and they finished at an ignominious run, with poor Tovey a bad last, the camp-oven hanging round his neck by its piece of flax.

Then we proceeded towards Ngatae's village through coarse fern almost as high as a man's head.

It was when we were, as I reckoned, about two miles from Taumarunui that armed men ran in from either side and asked us our errand.

They were fine-looking savages in full war-paint, and did not seem at all surprised when I told them what I had come for.

" The Chief awaits you," said their leader, a fierce-looking man named Porou, as I learnt later. Then he gave an order to the others, who pressed in and forced us down the track to a spot nearly opposite to a village which they call Matahanea.

By rights we ought to have recrossed the river higher up and crossed back again at this place, but I had decided to avoid all habitations until we got to our destination, so had kept to the rough path on the north side of the river.

Now we had picked up the main track again, and here we were halted, while scouts ran on ahead to announce our coming. We waited, without knowing it, at the scene of Moffatt's murder.[1] Probably Porou thought it was a handy spot, should Ngatae be of the same mind as he was before.

It was nearly dark when the messengers returned and gave Ngatae's answer to Porou, who forthwith hurried us down the river to the outskirts of Taumarunui, where he bundled us all into a large house with a fire in the centre of the floor, round which roamed several natives, mostly women, but here and there a man with next to no clothing on moving restlessly about.

One of these—a tall, thin, evil-looking chap—was even

[1] Described in Chapter III. Moffatt was killed at this spot, when on his way to recover the " treasure " he was said to have left hidden in Tuhua. I never heard of what the treasure consisted, but probably it contained, amongst other things, auriferous specimens, as Moffatt was known to have tried several places for gold, before the iron hand of Ngatae removed him.

more restless than the others, and looked furtively at me from time to time as he passed near.

"He looks a bit uncomfortable, sir," whispered Hardy. "I would not mind betting he has been up to no good."

I learnt afterwards that this restless individual was Takirau, the man who fired the bullets into Moffatt.

A little later he went out with the other men, having been fetched by a messenger.

There was a girl sitting near me, who was about the only person who appeared calm. She had a sweet-serious face and looked superior to the other women.

Now and again she glanced at me, and once I asked her her name.

"I am called Te Aitu, O Para," she answered with a smile.

"How did you learn my name?" I queried.

"Your name, O Para," she replied, "is well known to all the Maoris from Whanganui to Akarana. You are the white man the Government have sent to take away their lands from the Maoris. But have a care, lest they slay you."

"Will Ngatae slay me, think you?" I asked her.

"Aua!" she said slowly. "Not this time perhaps, for the Chief hates to kill people. But there are those behind him who would gladly see you die."

Presently a stalwart youth with a lighted torch in his hand came in and called me by name.

"The Chief Ngatae awaits you and your men," he said, beckoning.

So we followed him along a well-beaten track to the edge of the "marae," the large open space in the centre of the village.

Here we were halted, and our guide extinguished his torch.

CHAPTER XII

THE LION ROARS LOUDLY

After a time we got accustomed to the semi-darkness and gradually could distinguish objects in the near distance.

We saw what looked, as indeed it was, a mass of men in close formation opposite us. We heard a sound like heavy breathing, but beyond that nothing.

So we waited for what seemed an interminable time. We were helpless against odds of a hundred to one or more; the most powerful tribe in the land against ten men, of whom only one, myself, was armed. And I had not come there to right a wrong, but to try to prove that a wrong was right! It did not seem quite English.

While I was thinking these things I heard an exclamation from Hardy as men ran out from the huts on either side carrying flaming torches, then moved along the ranks of the warriors facing us, lighting the torches which every second man carried. The others carried guns.

When all was complete, the spectacle was magnificent. As Hardy said afterwards, it "beat the Pantomime hollow"; but he did not feel like joking then, and the others were in a state of semi-collapse.

The warriors wore little flax mats round their waists; otherwise they had no clothing. They were splendid as

they stood there motionless, like bronze statues, formed up three deep in crescent shape, with a narrow passage in the centre.

Down this passage towards us strode Ngatae, Chief of the Maoris, with two torch-bearers following him. On he came, carrying himself as a monarch should, erect and haughty, until he was about half-way between his warriors and myself. Then he wheeled round and shouted the weird cry of a battle-song, the second part of which was taken up by the ranks in voices like thunder. There was a note of defiance in Ngatae's line, and an answering shout of hate and determination in the men's reply.

After this had been repeated several times, Ngatae once more wheeled round and faced us. Then he called out to me by name, "Are you there, O Para?" And I stood forward and said, "I am here, O Ngatae."

Then he cried in his high-pitched musical voice: "According to the Treaty of Waitangi, Queen Victoria gave these lands to the Maoris for ever. Is that not so?"

And I answered, "Yes, that is so."

"Then why," he queried, "have the Government sent you to steal away our lands and give them to the white men?"

"They sent me here," I said, "to find a road for the railway which they intend to make from Whanganui to Auckland, but not to steal your lands."

"But we do not want your railway," cried the Chief, and all his warriors roared agreement. "If the railway comes, the white men will follow it and remain here for ever. We will not have the white men among us to treat the Maoris like dogs, as they do now in the towns! Why has the Queen broken her word? We were told she was a good woman, not a liar!"

"All these things, O Ngatae," I answered, "are matters

for the Government, not for me. I am only doing what I have been sent here for."

"That is so," replied the Chief, "and I have heard that men who know you speak well of you; but my word now to you is this, that you cannot proceed with your work in Tuhua. You see here some of my warriors; there are many more braves like unto them in the land I rule over, and they will do my bidding, no matter what I decide."

Then he strode back quickly to his men and, facing round, he gave a short word of command, at which they went through a war-dance, accompanied by horrible howls.

It was a new and terrifying experience for my men, who had never before seen such a spectacle, nor realised what Maoris are like when mad with rage. To me it was a repetition of the Manganui-a-te-ao warning, only on a larger scale, and made more mysterious by its taking place in the darkness of night.

Afterwards, the Maoris moved forward in frog-like jumps, without sound, with their heads on one side and their tongues lolling out. All but Ngatae, who sprang forward erect, with a spear held aloft in his right hand, the haft-head of which was decorated with finely dressed flax.

On they came, as one man, with horrible panther-like springs, until I could almost have touched Ngatae, and I began to think the Engineer-in-Chief had been right when he suggested the troops.

I was standing motionless, and also I hope expressionless, two or three paces in front of my party, who were squatted on the ground. I glanced round once when the enemy were about half-way towards us, and saw that they were shivering although the night was warm—all but Hardy, who was sitting bolt upright swearing softly to himself.

Suddenly Ngatae cried "Halt!" and the huge phalanx

stood as a rock. Then he called out harshly, "I will talk to you again to-morrow, O Para," and gave a signal to our guide, who told us to follow him back to the house whence we had been fetched.

Glad we were to get there too, for the tension had been great. The tongues of the Waimarino Maoris were loosened when we were inside, as they bewailed their fate, for they made sure they were doomed to die at the hands of the Tuhua men. They gave their opinion freely of the Government which had been the cause of all the trouble, and let me know pretty plainly that they wished I had stayed at home.

I was worried, I must confess, for I looked on myself as responsible for the lives of these nine men. As for my own life, well, it would not have been in danger had I taken the advice of the Chief Engineer, so I had only myself to blame.

I looked at the four white men. Baynes and Rogers were muttering together and every now and again casting an angry glance at me. I could guess what they were saying. The colonial workman is brought up in luxury, with plenty to eat, meat three times a day if he wants it, good wages and holidays galore. So, no matter where he is, he expects pickles with his meat and jam with his bread and butter. Any extra hardship is met with a frown, and danger makes him angry. This description does not, however, apply to them all, as there are some brilliant exceptions among them.

The imported Englishman has found it hard to make both ends meet in the Old Country, otherwise he would not have emigrated; so he is quite prepared for "short commons" now and again, looking on it as part of the day's work.

Tovey naturally looked rather uncomfortable, as it was a big change from a sleepy old town like Bath to the centre of a hostile semi-savage race who were only awaiting their Chief's word to finish us off.

Even Hardy appeared a trifle worried, and confided to me that he did not want to see those " jumping exercises " again, especially when he was the fly and the other side were the frogs. " Every time they jumped towards me," he said, " my heart seemed to jump out of my mouth. In fact, I have got the jumps myself now."

But he cheered up later and asked Tovey to sing us his " Cradle of the Deep." Poor Tovey, however, did not require any " rocking " in a cradle : he was already fast asleep with his head in the camp-oven lid. The others, too, were dropping off one by one, and soon they were all wrapped in oblivion.

The fire was nearly out, so I made it up with a log or two, and was just going to try to follow my companions' example, when a painted face was thrust in at the door, with its owner's hand holding a flaming torch.

" One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten," counted the visitor, who was none other than Porou. " The slaves are all here," he said to a companion whom I could not see, " and every one of them asleep except the ' devil man.' Shall I send him to sleep too ? "

" No ! " exclaimed the other ; " let Ngatae send him to sleep to-morrow ; leave him to deal with the white man ! "

" Pah ! Ngatae would not kill a flea unless we were behind to force him," said Porou savagely, and the two departed noiselessly, leaving me sorry I had not gone to sleep before they came.

CHAPTER XIII

PRISONER AGAIN

We were up early the next morning and strolled round near our dwelling without hindrance. There was a small stream close by on its way to join the river, and thither we went to wash, and mighty refreshing it was.

The friendlies mostly looked on. They seemed utterly cowed and miserable, looking round fearfully every time they heard the pad of naked feet. Later on the women brought us bowls of cooked potatoes with bits of pork thrown in here and there to flavour them.

We sat and smoked afterwards until a messenger arrived to summon me to Ngatae's presence. I followed him through the village to where a very large wharé stood, with richly carved woodwork on the front and a life-sized figure of a hideous god on either side of the entrance.

Some armed men of the Chief's special guard stood round the verandah of the house, with scowling faces, amongst them the savage-looking Porou, who was talking excitedly to the man Takirau. I thought how eagerly they would all have turned their guns on me had Ngatae but given the order. A few women were sitting about, and amongst them I recognised Te Aitu, who smiled on seeing me, which I took to be a good sign.

One thing I noticed about these people of Tuhua was their aristocratic bearing as compared with the dwellers in Manganui-a-te-ao, who were, as I have said before, a thick-set, sturdy race of men, turbulent like their river and rugged as their scenery.

Ngatae's people carried themselves well and spoke a purer Maori than the southern natives. In short, they were more refined.

I noticed all this before I crouched down to enter the Chief's doorway. Ngatae, his four wives and Wahanui were seated there, with the Chief in the centre, and as I got near enough to them to see and be seen, they all called out "Tenakoe, e Para," which is their form of greeting, meaning literally "That is you."

So I sat down opposite them, somewhat reassured, and returned their salutation.

Of the four wives, the eldest, whose name I learnt was Ata, had a hard, cross face, but bore traces of former beauty; two others were jolly-looking women inclined to stoutness, while the fourth, called Aorere, was a pretty girl of about eighteen.

Ngatae lost no time in getting to business. He told me that a tribal meeting had been held the night before, at which it was decided that I was to remain with them at Taumarunui for a time—in other words, that I was to consider myself a prisoner, while my followers were to return whence they came as soon as possible.

"We do not want men of another tribe here," said Ngatae; "their dwelling is at Waimarino—let them remain there! I do not interfere with Peehi Turoa: why should he interfere with me? Peehi is a wise man and a great Chief, and he must know he is doing wrong in

sending his men here. Your white workmen can go back with the Maoris to Waimarino or any other way you wish, but they must not stay here in Tuhua; besides, they will be of no use to you in this place. This is my word, and it is final."

Wahanui here struck in with, "You see, O Para, we wish to be left in peace. We want no white men here to upset our way of living. We are Maoris, and we prefer to live as Maoris."

"If I were a Maori, I should think as you do," I answered. "In your place I should object very strongly to strangers coming into my country. The Government, however, have sent me to do their bidding, and if I fail they will soon send someone else to do it, with an armed force behind him."

Ngatae's brow grew black when I said this. "We can meet force with force," he said sharply.

"Not for long," I argued. "Numbers must tell in the end. But why keep me here?" I asked. "It will only make the Government more angry."

"What I have said, I have said," snapped Ngatae. "You will remain here as my prisoner until I decide whether to kill you or send you back to Poneke."

And he waved his hand impatiently, as if he would hear no more. So there was nothing for me to do but go back to my men, which I did in every bit as big a rage as Ngatae was in. This made the fourth time I had been stopped by hostile Maoris, and I knew "civility" counted for nothing from Ngatae or any other chief. He might say "Tenakoe" one minute with a smile on his face, and the next minute he might order my immediate despatch. Besides, I was tired of telling them that I was only one out of many surveyors,

and that my death would not prevent the railway from coming through Maoriland. The fact of no notice being taken of Moffatt's murder perhaps made Ngatae think he could, with impunity, order his men to shoot me in the same manner.

So I passed out through the same sullen group of men who had been there when I went in, but I noticed a look of triumph in the faces of some as they stood aside to make way for me.

"Slave of a white man!" I heard Porou say. I turned and looked sharply at him, whereat he laughed mockingly.

It was no use having a row then, as they were too many for me, and it meant death if I struck one of them.

A thin weird-looking man with white whiskers stood in the pathway and glared into my eyes in a penetrating way. I returned his look defiantly until he stood on one side and allowed me to proceed. I guessed from his hypnotic eyes that he was the Witch-doctor, and found out later that I was right, his name being Tohiora.

"What luck, sir?" asked Hardy eagerly when I reached him.

"All right so far as you are concerned," was my answer, "but not so good for me."

Then I told them what Ngatae and Wahanui had decided, at which the Waimarino natives rejoiced, and sprang up eagerly to depart. But not so Hardy, whose rage was great.

"I am not going to leave you here alone, sir," he shouted. "If you stop, I stop. We have been together, off and on, for five years, and if there is danger I am going to share it."

Tovey and the other two white men also said they would remain if I wished it, so I had to explain to them all that it

would only aggravate the situation if we did not obey Ngatae's orders to the letter.

" The only trouble for you is the food," I added ; " you have not enough to take you through to Waimarino."

But here Hardy was equal to the occasion. " I will go and interview the ladies," he announced ; and sure enough he did so, and successfully too, for presently he returned with two damsels, each carrying a kit-bag full of potatoes, which they deposited just inside the house, and ran off laughing at Tovey's attempts to engage them in conversation.

After a while some armed men came down and spoke sharply to the Waimarino Maoris, who forthwith shouldered their share of the potatoes and moved off.

I gave Hardy instructions to work on the bush-track as soon as he got back to Peehi's village, so as to make any future journey to Tuhua easier to negotiate. I put him in charge of everything, shook hands with all four of the men, and watched them until they were out of sight. They turned several times and waved, until the high fern hid them from view.

Ngatae's file of warriors had stood near me, looking with curiosity at the disappearing men. Then they turned and asked me how many of them had come from England, and I said " Two."

" The first and the last as they left ? " queried one.

" Yes," I said, " but what made you think so ? "

" The other two look discontented," he replied, " as they say most white men do who are brought up in New Zealand, when there is much work and little food. The taller Englishman looks like a soldier."

" Yes, and he is a very good man," I said warmly.

" Né koia ? " (Is that really so ?) they asked eagerly, as

they moved off. "A very good man!" they repeated to each other—"So says Para. Koia ano!" And they sauntered away to the village, wondering greatly because I had given Hardy unqualified praise.

For want of something better to do, I strolled after them, taking care, however, not to show any inclination to pry into their dwellings. The men were mostly in their huts, sleeping or talking. Some of them watched me from the doors or windows in an apathetic way. The women were squatted about smoking and chattering volubly, though what on earth they found to discuss I could not quite understand. I suppose I was the principal topic of their conversation that day, as they lowered their voices when I drew near. Here and there they nodded to me, and one of them went so far as to say, "Nice day, Para."

I had walked the whole length of the village and was just going to turn back when I saw Te Aitu! She was sitting at the door of a little hut which she shared with her mother Rata, who had just come out and waddled off in another direction. So I strolled quietly as close as I could to the girl and gave her "Greeting."

"Greeting, O Para!" she returned in little more than a whisper, and without looking at me. "Be at the door of your wharé this evening after food has been eaten, for I must speak to you. Don't stop now; they are watching."

"Ae, I shall be there," I answered, as I moved off and gradually worked my way back to my lonely dwelling.

The day hung heavily on my hands, and I was glad when two women brought me food. Even pork and potatoes made a break in the monotony.

After eating, I moved out to the verandah of my dwelling,

and soon the stately figure of Te Aitu came in sight. She was singing softly to herself and was accompanied by a small girl of about twelve or thirteen.

When they had collected my bowls and had come out, Te Aitu said sharply to the child, " Run down to the stream and wash out the bowls " ; and the child ran.

Then Te Aitu, speaking quickly and quietly, said, " Lo ! O Para, the Chief Ngatae and Wahanui are in favour of letting you go back, and some of the others are of the same mind, but Porou and Takirau and many more wish to slay you, as they did Moffatt. Even now they are talking over the matter, and to-morrow I shall hear what they intend doing and shall let you know somehow, for I wish not that you shall be killed without warning. But do not try to escape in daylight, for men with guns are watching you all the time and hoping that you may try to get away, when they will shoot you promptly and say you first attacked them."

Then she glided away, crying noisily to the child to hurry back, and the two disappeared.

I thought I should be left alone for the rest of the day ; but to my astonishment, when it was near dark, the Chief Ngatae himself came in to see me, with his youngest wife, Aorere.

" Tena koe, e Para ! " he said by way of greeting, and I replied " Tena Korua," so as to include his wife, but I did not attempt to rise, as that would have been contrary to etiquette.

Then they sat down and lit their pipes, and after a pause the girl asked me if I had enough food given me, and so we passed on to general topics.

Ngatae was a charming man to talk to, clear-minded

and anxious to learn, while his girl-wife was merry and bright, and obviously proud and fond of her husband.

We all three chatted for quite a long time, until Ngatae rose up and said with a grim laugh to his wife, " We shall have Ata here presently," at which the girl shrugged her shoulders disdainfully and followed her husband back to the Chief's wharé.

CHAPTER XIV

TE AITU SUGGESTS

NGATAE had set a good example to his subjects by visiting me, and the next day I was inundated with callers. Even the black-browed Ata stalked gloomily in.

"Aorere was here yesterday with Ngatae, wasn't she?" she asked suspiciously, and I answered in the affirmative, adding, "She seems a nice woman."

"Nice woman!" she echoed. "Ae! and so another man thinks besides her husband!"

At this there were grunts of disapproval from some of those there.

"Presently, Ngatae will be angry with you," said one.

"Meaha!" said the jealous wife. "Let him be angry!"

I thought it was wise then to change the conversation, but did it clumsily by asking about Ngatae's heir, when I might have remembered he was Ata's son.

"Yes," she snorted, "and my son's wife Amohaere is no better than Aorere, for she is even as her shadow, only she does not travel alone like Aorere."

"Why does Aorere travel alone?" I asked politely.

"Ah! why does she!" sneered Ata. "Perhaps Haria knows!"

It struck me I was beginning to learn all the gossip of the place, and I was not sorry when Ata cleared out.

So things dragged on for some days and I heard nothing of Ngatae's intentions towards me, but each time a warrior looked in my wharé I quite expected to be called out to face a firing party. Porou and Hika hurled epithets at me whenever we met, but most of the men treated me with silent contempt. Ngatae and Wahanui were studiously courteous, and the women I came across were quite pleasant and talkative.

Te Aitu seemed almost afraid to look in my direction, but late one evening as I stole near her house, she managed to whisper to me that Ngatae was awaiting the arrival of outlying chiefs to hold a final palaver before the tribe made up their minds whether to kill me or not.

"To-morrow," she added significantly, "there will be a big pig-hunt in order to provide a feast for the visitors. Some of the sentries will go hunting too, and but few men will remain in Taumarunui. Perchance you are swift of foot, O Para? Now go, for Tohiora the Witch-doctor is coming this way."

I sauntered back slowly to my wharé, exchanging greetings here and there with acquaintances, but all the time thinking over my chances of escape on the morrow. For I was quite determined to make my effort then, as Te Aitu had suggested. I might never get such an opportunity again, and if I could only win past Matahanea I might manage to gain the bush. Besides, I did not want to sample a fresh lot of Maoris from the backwoods, as there was no knowing what their tastes might be like. They might be ferocious in manner like Porou, or bland and persuasive as Tuatini, yet I felt sure none of them would

be really glad to see me. They might pretend to be pleased; they might even go so far as to press their noses against my nose, but the chances were that they would make sure that I was dead and buried before they returned to their fastnesses.

So I determined to try to avoid an introduction to any fresh warriors. There were quite enough already in the neighbourhood, and eight had been found sufficient to kill and bury Moffatt in a quiet, workmanlike manner—at least that is what I gathered from scraps of conversation I overheard. Besides, I wanted badly to disappoint Porou and his insolent young relative Hika, not to mention the white-whiskered witch-doctor who was on such intimate terms with the Maori deities.

But above all, somehow, there stood out the girl Te Aitu, who had done her best for me for no particular reason—for she hated the white race as cordially as Porou hated it. I wanted her to think I had followed her advice with energy, and I wanted her to say "Well done, O Para!" no matter what the ending of my attempt might be, whether I won through, or whether a sentry potted me before I gained the shelter of the bush. Somehow I seemed to see her face more often than anyone else's—her somewhat serious, critical face, with its occasional whimsical smile.

"Perchance you are swift of foot, O Para!" she had said meaningly to me, and I was going to try to prove to her on the morrow that her words had been understood, and that I could give a good account of myself, although I did belong to the hated English race!

It was a bright moonlight night, when departed spirits kept to their own haunts, so living Maoris were not afraid to walk abroad. It therefore fell out that evening that

Ngatae came to visit me, accompanied by Aorere, and also by his son Kongé and Amohaere, his charming daughter-in-law. Others came besides, among them Moka, the ill-used aunt, with her usual dirty pipe and well-aired grievance.

With the exception of Moka, they were such a charming lot of people that it was difficult to understand that I was practically under sentence of death! And even Moka thawed somewhat after she had refilled her huge pipe from my pouch.

"Presently," she grunted, "Para will be leaving for Te Reinga [1] (abode of spirits). Perhaps he will leave his tobacco here, unless the gods wish for it."

"Silence, woman!" said Ngatae. "What has the white man got to do with you?"

"Kahore," muttered the widow, meaning "Nothing," but she kept her eye on my pouch.

"Has your Queen any power?" presently asked Kongé, "or is she simply like one of the images of our gods which stand outside the Chief's house?"

"Sometimes," I explained, "she gets cross and puts her foot down, but as a rule she acts on advice."

"Ke!" they screamed, "and she calls herself a Queen! No wonder she broke the Treaty of Waitangi!"

"Ngatae here," said Aorere majestically, "is supreme ruler over all Tuhua! His word is law, and he does not lie like your Government. What Te Aitu says is quite true, the white men are an evil race; they cannot speak the

[1] "Te Reinga" means in English "The Leap," and this is the name the Maoris have given to the northernmost cape in New Zealand. Here, they believe, the spirits of the dead go, on their exit from the body, and plunge into the sea, to enjoy thereafter everlasting bliss, in whatever form they prefer.

truth. Even your missionaries are liars, and every chance they get they steal our land."

"Ae!" said Ngatae thoughtfully, "and yet they tell me the God they follow is a God of Truth and Love."

"Anyhow," croaked Moka, "if there had been no missionaries, there would have been no briar-bushes, for wherever a missionary settled a briar-bush sprang up, so they say, and the birds and the north wind scattered the seed through our lands."

"Yes, you are right, O widow," said the Chief. "But let us get home before the moon goes to bed, lest the spirits waylay us!"

So they stooped down, one by one, and went out through the little doorway, Ngatae first and Moka last. Amohaere pushed her husband ahead of her.

"It won't do to leave you behind with the widow," she said to him with a giggle. "You might fall in love with her again."

CHAPTER XV

MY FLIGHT FROM TUHUA

THEY brought me my breakfast earlier than usual the next morning. Two surly-looking women with hoarse voices put down the bowls somewhere near me, and stalked out after informing me that their supply of pork had given out.

"Nothing left but potatoes, pakeha (white man)," they grunted. "If you don't like them, your stomach will remain empty." And they went away laughing grimly.

I felt inclined to retort that the sight of their faces did not tend to improve my appetite, but in the end I simply said, "Meaha!" And then I ate heartily, for I did not know what was before me that day. I had almost emptied the dish and was washing down my meal, when a gentle step sounded outside, and the figure of all others I wished to see appeared before me, the figure of Te Aitu!

I rose up and went forward to meet her, in defiance of all Maori custom, and she greeted me with outstretched hand and a smile on her lips. For she had somehow learnt English ways in her occasional trips to the towns to attend Land Courts, and they seemed to come naturally to her.

"Are you going to try to escape to-day?" she asked hurriedly.

" Yes, as soon as the hunters have started," I replied.

" Then may the gods have you in their care, O Para ! " said the girl ; " for although I hate the white race, I would fain see you win safely home."

Saying which, Te Aitu leant forward with upturned face until our noses met, then hastily picking up the empty bowls she made swiftly away. And I went out of the house to see the last of her, as she walked back to the village with erect carriage and a defiant toss of her head. For she was of high lineage, and carrying a white man's dirty dishes was scarcely fit work for Ngatae's cousin, even though that white man was myself. Anyhow, so she let the other women think, although she turned when half-way and smiled whimsically—or so it seemed to me as I watched her.

I climbed on to a rising piece of ground near by, whence I had a good view all round, and watched the preparations for the great pig-hunt being made in the village marae. It was rather amusing to look at, for all the Maoris who could get about at all were there, in an excited state. Every dog they could muster was present—about fifty or sixty of them, and mostly mangy—all shapes, colours and sizes, and every one of them barking at nothing. They were for the greater part mere skin and bone, and some of them leant against posts while they barked. The natives themselves seemed to be trying to outdo the dogs, for every man, woman and child was talking, most of them at the top of their voices.

I sat and smoked and watched them for about an hour, until they gradually broke up into two parties, one heading west and the other south, while the women remained behind. Those who went south had to cross the river,

which took them some time, as it is wide at the ford just above the falls. So I waited until I saw them streaming out on the other side, and then strolled back to my wharé.

Hastily shoving in a blanket the few biscuits which Hardy had left behind, I strapped it up in as small compass as possible, and carrying it in front of me, I stepped out of my prison-house and walked away in the direction of Matahanea without showing any undue haste.

I wanted to get clear away as soon as possible before any gossips should call to see me, as I knew if I were missed for any length of time my absence would arouse suspicion and cause an alarm to be given.

A sentry was posted opposite Matahanea in the direction in which I was going. I had seen the glint of his gun-barrel in the sun while I was watching the start of the expedition, but I was not visible to him where I was now, so I set to and ran for a mile or so along the track, then I strapped my blanket on my back and struck across country in a south-easterly direction, so as to cross the river below Matahanea and give that village a wide berth on the other side.

The fern was high and thick in places, but here and there were bare patches where I could run, but nearly all the time I had to stoop as I went, for fear the sentry should see me.

I went panting on until I came to the river, and worked a little way up it to where there was a shallow ford over which I splashed with some difficulty, as the current was swift. Previous to crossing I had taken off my socks—I could not wait to remove more clothing—and now I sat down on the other bank to put them on again.

I was just finishing the lacing of my second boot when I heard a voice quite close to me saying, " E hara i te hanga " (It is most extraordinary), then the patter of naked feet and the same remark repeated two or three times, each time farther away. I ventured to peep over the bank, when I recognised a dirty, garrulous old man called Hokimai, whom I had met before, disappearing in the direction of Taumarunui. He was talking to himself as he ambled along, and reminded me of some character in " Alice in Wonderland." He succeeded, however, in giving me a shock, as had I been a bare half minute sooner I should have come face to face with him, and it would have then been for me to say " E hara i te hanga ! "

The old chap trotted on, apparently full of his own thoughts, and as soon as I lost sight of the top of his woolly head I redoubled my efforts to get to the opening in the bush whence we had emerged from Waimarino. I dodged round the back of Matahanea very cautiously, and then slipped along through the edge of the bush where the women gathered their firewood, steering partly by compass and partly by the range of hills to the southward.

I remember a little coasting steamer on the west coast of the South Island which used to trade to a place called Hokitika, backwards and forwards, and everyone connected with the boat always swore that the engines used to say " Hokitika ! Hokitika ! " all the time they were working. I thought of it now when I was running for dear life to Waimarino, and my brain seemed to be throbbing out the whole time, " Waimarino ! Waimarino ! "

After I had travelled some distance farther, I heard a cry a good way off on my left, but somewhat behind me ; then another cry in a different key. It sounded like people

calling to each other across a river. For, as I have said before, the Maori language is so framed that it is easily understood at a great distance, being shorn of sibilants and each word ending in a vowel. I concluded the voices I heard belonged to the dwellers in Matahanea, so I felt much safer, and, happening to strike a narrow track running in the direction I wished to go, I ventured to run along it as hard as I could.

It turned out to be a foolish thing to do, for on rounding a sharp bend I ran full tilt into a girl with such force that she stumbled backwards and fell.

She was up in a moment, and before I had recovered my breath she cried out, "Whither goest thou, O Para?" And I, seeing that it was only the half-witted girl Te Rehe, answered that I was merely travelling without any object—"Haereere noa iho," as the Maoris call it.

"Then why do you carry a blanket?" she asked knowingly.

"What is that to you?" I replied, as I pushed past her hurriedly.

"I must tell Whakapaki!" she cried, and ran like a hare towards Matahanea.

It was useless to try to stop her, so I fled on towards the bush opening, praying I might meet no one else. I thought, as I ran, that I heard a great sound of shouting behind me, so concluded Te Rehe had reached Matahanea and warned the Chief Whakapaki of my escape.

The path now took a sharp turn to the left down to the river, so I had to leave it and bear up to the right, but the going was not very bad, save that it was uphill.

Presently a shot rang out behind me, then another, and after that a volley, so I knew that the tribe had been roused

and were after me—that is, the few who were left behind from pig-hunting.

I reckoned there was only a mile and a half or so between me and the place where we had emerged from the bush, so began to feel more hopeful, but it was touch and go, as I should soon be seen by my pursuers.

CHAPTER XVI

I FIGHT POROU

I STAYED to rinse my mouth out at a little running stream, and sat down for a minute's rest, as my heart was beating violently.

I could see the Whanganui River from where I sat, and, on the opposite side, the village which had seemed deserted when we were on our way into Tuhua and through which we had had to pass. It was not deserted now, as smoke was rising from two or three fires there, and I could make out some figures running about in an excited way.

Then I rose once more and plunged ahead towards my goal. There should not be much difficulty in finding it, as we had taken the precaution to " blaze " a big tree on either side of the entrance which we had made wide at the mouth.

As I ran panting on, stooping low as much as I could, I searched the bush fringe with my eyes in great longing for the marks, but they were farther away than I had thought. I was beginning to wonder if I could have missed them in my eagerness or through the perspiration which now and again blinded me, when suddenly I caught sight of them about three hundred yards ahead.

Instinctively I gave a shout of joy, which, to my dismay,

was answered by a yell of recognition from my right, and, looking up, I saw a party of Maoris working their way along the edge of the bush towards the entrance of my track.

They had caught sight of me, and were hurrying to cut me off. One big man was some yards ahead of them, straining every nerve to catch me.

Luckily I was rather nearer the opening than they were; otherwise I should have had no chance of escape. I cursed my luck in having rested by the way, as every minute was of supreme importance to me. But of course the real cause of the trouble was the crazy girl, as, if I had not met her, the alarm could not have been given, and the pig-hunters would have gone on looking for pigs instead of chasing me.

For I had no doubt in my mind that this was the foraging party which had gone south from Taumarunui, with Porou as leader, and that it was he who was outpacing his comrades now in his endeavour to stop me. He, of course, would not spare me, and the thought of him gloating over my capture spurred me to fresh efforts.

So on we went, pace for pace, through the rough fern-land, but I was in better training than he was and gained slightly towards the end. Twenty yards from the bush I made my final sprint. Porou was perhaps thirty yards from the entrance, and, seeing that I should get there first and so perhaps escape, he called out, "Stop! you white pig!" and fired, but missed. He took more careful aim next time, but my revolver barked twice at the same time, which must have spoilt his shot, for the bullet barely grazed the back of my neck as I plunged into the bush.

Porou was after me as I tried to hurry on, but the track was difficult to pick up, so I could not make rapid headway. The Maori had bare feet, however, and had never seen the track before, so I hoped to shake him off before long. But hoping did not appear to be much good, as he actually seemed to be gaining on me, judging by the sounds he made brushing through the undergrowth.

To begin with, I never anticipated his following me after I had entered the bush. I thought he would rejoin his party and return to Tuhua, content to think they had got rid of me. But here he was, with vengeance in his soul, actually determined to follow me to the death; for that was what he meant, I had no doubt, for he was a man of ungovernable temper. I had my revolver, but I did not want to kill him or any other Maori unless actually forced to in self-defence. It would mean "Good-bye" to the railway, or else a very long postponement, and I should never be admitted to the land of Tuhua again as engineer-in-charge. There would be no witnesses to the fight between fierce Porou and myself; if he killed me, no one outside Tuhua would know whose hand had done the deed, but if I killed him I should be for ever branded as a cold-blooded murderer.

So we went on for, may be, a quarter of an hour, when I discovered how he gained on me. The track wound here and there pretty considerably, and he could hear me some distance ahead, and so cut off corners and steal a march on me. If he once got a clear sight of me, the fellow would shoot without doubt.

My only hope was to wait for him and have it out, so I held on until I came to a long, straight piece, down which

I ran for all I was worth, and then dodged quickly behind a big tree at the edge of the path. There I waited, trying to regain my breath.

Presently I heard Porou coming at full tilt, breathing heavily, so I pulled myself together and sprang out on him just as he was passing. I had my arms round his neck, and down we went with a crash, his head striking the ground with a mighty thud, as I intended it should.

There we lay for a few seconds, when, seeing that he was still, I got off him and went to pick up the man's gun, which had flown out of his hand some distance ahead. As I turned with it in my hand Porou came at me with his knife raised and murder in his eyes. He was half-dazed from his fall, and struck blindly, so that I easily parried his thrust with the muzzle of the gun, and as he lurched past me I swung the butt end down on the back of his head with such force that he fell like a log, at full stretch.

He lay there for so long that I began to fear his soul had gone to Te Reinga, so I turned him over and listened for his heart-beats. They became more regular after a short time, and I saw his eyelids begin to flicker, so I thought it was time to be off, especially as I could now distinguish the voices of the other Maoris gradually getting nearer and calling loudly to Porou.

I took the fellow's gun with me, as I wished to run no unnecessary risks, but I left his long pig-knife there sticking point downwards in the middle of the track, where he could not fail to find it.

Then, as he began to stir, I fled towards Waimarino, with great thankfulness in my heart. I had escaped from Tuhua

and I had beaten Porou in a fair fight, so Te Aitu's prayer to her gods seemed to have borne fruit.

I wondered what she would think when she heard the news! Probably her heart would beat a little faster, as she thought to herself, "Well done, O Para!"

CHAPTER XVII

AORERE AND AMOHAERE

I REACHED Peehi's village at dusk on the third day, and I was glad to see the friendly faces again and to hear the shouts of "Naumai," as hands were stretched out in greeting.

Most of the women were actually crying for joy at finding me safe and well. Ngawai clung to me while we pressed noses, which she insisted on.

"Me hongi taua!" she murmured with upturned face, while the tears ran down her cheeks as she whispered, "It is good to see you again, O Para!"

Then I went on to the camp, where Tovey was airing his voice as usual in "The Cradle of the Deep," and there I again met with a hearty welcome, with eager questioning as to how I managed to escape.

So I told them all about my run for life, and how I had outwitted Porou and left him stunned in the track. They laughed about old Hokimai and about the crazy girl whom I had bowled over.

"I believe I saw her, sir, at Taumarunui," said Hardy. "Is her face all creases and wrinkles?"

"Yes, that's the girl," I said, "and if it had not been for her giving the alarm, I should have got away pretty easily."

So we sat and talked, and then I ate a meal of bacon,

potatoes and bread which ought to have lasted me a week. After which I lit my pipe and went over to Peehi's wharé runanga, where I had to tell them all over again about my narrow escape.

The men who had gone with me to Tuhua were not surprised at Porou's conduct, for they had seen from the man's looks what his nature was.

"Ngatae is friendly, O Para," they said. "He would not slay you, but most of his followers would."

"That girl who whispered to you," said one, "is of the Chief's blood, and would have tried to save you, although they say she hates the white race."

"Yes," I said innocently; "Te Aitu did her best."

"Who is Te Aitu?" queried a voice, which I recognised as belonging to Ngawai.

At which there was a silence, which I broke by saying casually, "Te Aitu is daughter of a woman named Rata, cousin to the Chief Ngatae."

Someone near me whispered, "Ngawai is jealous." But the girl showed no sign of anger as she rose from her mat yawning and stretching herself lazily.

"I am sleepy," she murmured, and went out. But as she passed me I saw the tears welling out from her eyes, so I followed her.

And, O dear! how she did cry when I found her! I thought her heart would break! But she forgave me in the end. Not that there was anything to forgive, but women—no matter what their colour may be—are a different race to men. What seems a comedy to a man is a real tragedy to a woman.

So I stayed some days at Waimarino, for there was much to be done there before I went south to Wellington.

There is a big stream near Peehi's place called Makatote, or Stork's River, which runs in the bed of the deepest gully in the whole length of the railway route, and it concerned me much to try and find a suitable crossing for the line. So I spent some time exploring the banks in an endeavour to lessen the cost of the projected bridge without materially altering the direction of the railway.

In addition to this, I put extra men on to clear the tracks through the bush northward and southward, as far as possible by means of the compass, in order to shorten the distance between the different points, and at the same time make the going possible for pack-horses.

Then I journeyed to Wellington, about two hundred miles away, and explained matters to the Government, who were all for sending an armed force into Tuhua. But in the end I persuaded the Engineer-in-Chief to write a diplomatic letter to Ngatae, explaining everything and saying how sorry he was to have to insist on the railway route being laid out, but that the Government were determined to carry their scheme through, and that they particularly wished to do so without bloodshed. So he asked the Chief, as a special favour, to let me complete my flying survey, and subscribed himself his " true friend."

I also enclosed a note, thanking Ngatae for his hospitality, and giving my reason for departing so suddenly as a wish to remain alive.

These despatches I took with me to Auckland, and, having journeyed thence as far south as I could without infringing on Maori susceptibilities, I sent them by a native messenger to Ngatae, and awaited his reply at a little town called Te Awamutu on the borders of the " King Country."

In the end I received word from the Chief that he would

meet me at a Maori village about half-way to Taumarunui. So I hired a native guide and a horse, and travelled thither quickly.

It is all open country round there, with a vast extent of swamps. These latter are for the most part dangerous to cross on foot—on horseback they are impassable.

We skirted round the eastern edge of these swamps, and reached Ngatae's temporary abode one evening about sunset.

My arrival might have been the arrival of a bullock or a pig for all the notice that was taken of it. We rode through the village without greeting of any sort, but as we drew near to the Chief's house two stalwart Maoris stepped forward and told me to dismount. One of them led away my horse, while the other, bidding me follow him, guided me to a small but decent-looking wharé at the end of the village, standing somewhat by itself.

"This is where you are to stop," he said sulkily. "They will bring you food presently." With that he strode off.

I had unstrapped my blankets from my saddle, and brought them with me, so I unrolled them now and sat waiting.

It was growing dark, and presently, as I sat listening, I heard a giggle as of someone who was half afraid.

Then a voice said, "Aué! but I am frightened lest an evil spirit come near me."

"I also," said another voice which I thought I recognised, "and there is no light in the wharé." Then she called out loudly, "Have you no candle, O Para?"

So I shouted, "Yes, O friends. I am lighting it." And as I put a match to the wick, two women entered stooping, carrying bowls containing food.

"Tena koe, e Para," they said, and I returned their greeting; then going forward, holding up the light, I recognised the laughing faces of Aorere and Amohaere, the respective wives of Ngatae and Kongé.

They shook hands, and seemed quite pleased to see me again. Then they squatted down opposite me while I ate my meal, smoking their pipes, which they had filled from my pouch.

"Is Te Aitu here?" I asked presently, and the two stared in amazement.

"What has Te Aitu to do with you?" they asked.

"Nothing," I replied lamely; "only as she is a cousin of Ngatae's, I thought she might have come with him."

"And if she had," said Aorere, "what is she to you, O Para? You must know that Te Aitu hates white men."

"Yes, that is why I asked," I replied; "but where is Porou?"

At which the two girls giggled and said, "At Matahanea."

"Ke! but that was a blow you gave him, O Para!" laughed Aorere. "When they carried him home we thought he was dead."

"We hoped so, you mean," added Amohaere. "Aué! but his temper was awful when he came to his senses! He tried to hit Hinewhiu every time she came near him."

"The brute!" I said. "He did his best to kill me."

"He says he will the next time he meets you," they cried. "So be careful, O Para."

I was just going to ask them what sort of a mood Ngatae was in, when a man, with a torch in his hand, entered abruptly, and called on me to follow him to the Chief's presence.

"Let us all go together!" said the girls. "Then we shall not see ghosts!"

So we walked across in single file to Ngatae's house, the guide stalking in front, and the two girl friends behind me, scuttling along in pretended fear.

CHAPTER XVIII

NGATAE'S PARABLE

NGATAE had Wahanui on his right and Kongé on his left. The Witch-doctor and two or three others were there, looking like images carved out of wood.

I called out "Greeting," when I entered the house, and the Chief gravely returned my salutation.

Then we smoked in silence for a few minutes, when Aorere and Amohaere, who had sat down just behind me, dug me in the back with their fingers and whispered "Speak!"

So I rose up and told Ngatae all that had happened to me since last I saw him, and I could tell by the eyes of the Chief and his followers that they were all listening intently, though no one moved a muscle.

I laid particular stress on the fact that Porou had intended to murder me, and that I had had him at my mercy, and yet refrained from killing him.

"What would you have done in my place, O Ngatae?" I cried. "Would you not have sent his soul to the Abode of Spirits?"

"I most certainly would," said Ngatae grimly, and the two girls muttered "Of course," which nearly made me laugh.

Then I asked him what he intended doing with me. Was I to complete my flying survey, or was I to return to the Government and say, " Ngatae forbids it ? "

" On your head be it, O Chief," I cried, " if the soldiers of the White Queen come here to slay your people ! My heart would be very sad were harm to happen to any of the Maori race, for they are as my own people, and great is my love for them. As for me, I am but servant to the Government, and have to do as they bid. It is not by my wish that the railway is to come through your country, and I will see that you get full price for whatever is taken of your lands. Besides, the Government want only that which is sufficient for the line, nought else. That is all I have to say, O Chief." And I sat down.

The silence which followed was presently broken by the harsh voice of the Witch-doctor, saying, " Trust him not, O Ngatae ! All white men are liars ! "

" Ka tika tau ! " (You are right !) said a woman whom I had not recognised before. She was sitting in the shadow behind Ngatae, and I now saw it was Ata.

" Let the Chief speak ! " cried out Wahanui. " It is for others to listen, not to talk."

" Ka tika tau ! " said the two girls behind me, in imitation of Ata, and I heard them laugh softly.

I saw Ngatae hand his lighted pipe to Ata, and then he stood up straight, looking every inch a ruler, but I thought he seemed tired and sad. And this is what he said :

" Very, very many years ago, at the time when the great god Maui dwelt among us, a tribe of Pigeons settled down in this land. They made their home here, but they were free to wander at will throughout the islands of Aotearoa and Waipounamu (North and South Islands of New

Zealand). They sometimes fought among themselves, as all creatures on this earth must fight, but nevertheless, they lived contentedly and prospered exceedingly. They built their nests year after year, and brought up their young, until in time they became numerous and waxed fat.

" But one day a big bird of another species flew overhead and spied out the fatness of the land. This bird the Pigeons afterwards learnt was called a Hawk. After a time the Hawk returned, and remained poised for a short space above one of the nests. Then he suddenly dropped like a stone, picked up a young Pigeon and flew away with it. The next day other Hawks came, and one by one, they dropped down as the first Hawk had dropped, and stole the young birds.

" Then the Pigeons got angry and held counsel together, and when the Hawks next came they attacked them with all the strength they possessed, so that the Hawks left their country for a time.

" But after a while they returned in greater strength, and the Pigeons were hard put to it to save any of their belongings.

" And so it went on, until the Pigeons were sore distressed and their hearts were sad within them. If things continued like this, they reasoned, they would soon be wiped out ; for the Hawks, be it known, were better armed for the fight than the Pigeons, and knew better how to use their strength and cunning.

" Then the Pigeons took counsel together again, and their King said, ' Let us seek out the Queen of the Hawks and make peace with her ; otherwise there will soon be none of us left.'

" So they sought out the Queen Hawk, and tried to reason

with her. And in the end the Queen said, 'Lo! I will give you this land wherein ye dwell for ever, but the rest of Aotearoa and the whole of Waipounamu shall be mine to do as I will with.'

"And the King of the Pigeons, knowing there was no help for it, said, 'So be it, O Queen!'

"And they made a treaty, which they called the Treaty of Waitangi, whereby no Hawk was to come within the boundaries of Pigeon Land.

"But, after long years, the Hawks said among themselves, 'Lo! that is a fair land which our fathers gave to the King of the Pigeons. Let us seize part of it!'

"The King of the Pigeons said, 'Ye cannot, for your Queen gave it to us for ever.'

"But the Hawks, who had grown very strong and numerous, persisted, saying they only wanted a strip of the country, so that they could fly backwards and forwards through it. And they also said that they would compel the Pigeons by force to yield this strip.

"And the King of the Pigeons, whose heart was very sad within him, saw that he could not fight against the united strength of the Hawks, so he gave in to their false Queen. The Pigeons will not fight the Hawks. They will let them take whatever they want. But alas for the Pigeons!"

Ngatae sat down, and there was silence for two or three minutes. Then the Witch-doctor suddenly sprang up and commenced to curse the race of white men in the most lurid language at his command. He not only cursed the living generation, but he also cursed their ancestors and their unborn children. He kept his fierce, hypnotic eyes fixed on me all the time he was speaking, and I expected every moment he would spring at my throat. His rage was

positively awful to witness. But in the end he sat down, panting convulsively.

Then Ngatae called across to me with what sounded like a break in his voice.

" You have heard my words, O Para," he said. " The land of the Maoris is now open to you and your men."

And I answered, " It is well, O Ngatae," and went out to my hut, feeling ashamed and sad.

As I was riding off the next morning behind my surly guide—a young fellow who had picked up the evil habits of the whites—Aorere and Amohaere came running up to say " Good-bye."

" Are you satisfied now, O Para ? " questioned Ngatae's wife, and I answered " Yes ! "

" Would you be satisfied if you were a Maori ? " she asked, and I replied " Probably not ! "

" Aué ! " wailed Amohaere. " Why did you ever come here ? "

PART III

WHAT HAPPENED IN MAORILAND AFTER I GOT THERE

CHAPTER XIX

I RECEIVE AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE

As has been said before, Peehi Turoa was an aristocrat who ruled his people with an iron hand concealed in a velvet glove. He always gave one the impression of a man who ought to be wearing dress clothes, with the ribbon of some order across his breast. Perhaps the haughty poise of his head had something to do with it, or his handsome, clean-cut features, or his easy, cynical style of conversation, or perhaps all three together; but the fact remains that Peehi would have graced any great lady's drawing-room, and would probably have felt quite at home there. Instead of which Fate had made him Chief of a tribe of Maoris dwelling on the plains of Waimarino, miles away from anywhere. And he was quite content and happy, although his elder brother, Topia Turoa, had four wives to Peehi's two and paid state visits with a retinue, whereas Peehi generally went unaccompanied and dispensed with ceremony. Peehi lived the simple life, with sometimes a scarcity of food; but it satisfied him, and he never changed his dress for dinner.

He was seated outside his house when I rode up, with a wife on either side of him and several other Maoris grouped around.

" Naumai ! " they cried, and I went forward and shook hands with them all, but Ngawai shrunk back and did not speak or offer me any greeting. I thought this strange, but made no remark.

Then I sat down and told them all that had happened, as a result of which the whole of Maoriland was now open to me and my party.

At this there were murmurings among the natives, but nothing hostile. Peehi saw to that. One look from him was sufficient to quell any disturbance.

" And what is your next move, O Para ? " he asked.

" To put on more men," I answered, " and mark out the line up to Te Awamutu."

Just then a young Maori who had strolled up looked at me in a frightened way and bolted.

" What on earth is the matter with the man ? " I asked.

An old woman next to me said, in an undertone, " He is afraid of you, O Para, lest you be angry with him."

" What ever for ? " I queried.

" Because he is Ngawai's husband," she answered. " Peehi made Ngawai marry him against her will, because her heart was with you."

So that was it ! " Aué ! " as the Maoris would say. Then I moved over to where Ngawai crouched in the shadow, crying softly, and took her hand and told her how sorry I was. At which she cried still more.

Then we kept our noses together for quite a long time, while she told me all about it. Aué ! Aué !

I bustled the men round the next day, and got a move on towards Taumarunui. I hustled them through the bush out into Tuhua, right into Ngatae's country, leaving them to work south from the spot where I fought Porou.

Then I went north alone to Te Awamutu to get my orders. Ngatae was back in Taumarunui, so I called to see him and to hire a horse for my journey northward.

The Chief was kind and courteous, but looked worried. The irrepressible Aorere and Amohaere were, however, as lively as ever, and had apparently got over their grief at the coming of the white man into their country.

"Te Aitu is here," said one. "We told her you had asked for her."

"Oh!" I answered indifferently. "What did she say to that?"

"She said nothing," said Amohaere, "but her face got red, and she walked away with her head held high, as if she were angry."

"She is not angry with Para," said Aorere, "but angry about the colour of his skin. If he were dark like a Maori, she might care for him."

"Te Aitu," I said solemnly, "will never care for anyone."

"Yes, she will!" replied Amohaere, thrusting her face nearly into mine. "Te Aitu will care for one man, and one man only."

"And who is the one man, and one man only, Te Aitu will care for?" I asked.

"Why, yourself, of course, O Para! She already loves you, and you know it." And Amohaere laughed saucily as she moved away with her companion.

"Does holding her head high and getting red in the face show she is in love?" I called after Kongé's wife.

"Ask Te Aitu!" was her mocking answer.

Then I moved on into Ngatae's house, where many questions were asked me by the Chief and Wahanui, while Ata and Tohiora sat and glared at me. None of the

Maoris looked pleased at my coming, and as for Porou, when he came in and caught sight of me I thought he was going to have a fit! Hatred, malice and everything devilish were stamped deep on his face, including murder. He still looked a bit shaky from the blow I had given him on the back of his head, but I was glad to see he was not in a moribund state.

He looked round the room until he caught sight of his wife and child, then called roughly to Hinewhiu to follow him. So she sighed deeply, picked up her little boy and went out obediently after her husband.

I followed a minute or two later, and watched the two trudging towards Matahanea, with the child in a shawl on Hinewhiu's back.

Then I wandered round the village and came shortly to the hut where Te Aitu and her mother Rata lived.

"Tena koe, e Para!" said the deep musical voice I wished to hear, and I turned to see Te Aitu sitting in the doorway, with a smile of welcome on her face.

So I went and sat down by her, while we discussed things in general and the railway in particular. Te Aitu was filled with anger at the thought of white men coming into Tuhua.

"Why cannot you leave us in peace?" she cried. "We were quite happy before you came."

"I am sorry I came," I replied, "if you hate me so."

"I don't hate you, Para," said the girl, colouring slightly, "but I hate the race of white men."

Her mother came up then, carrying firewood, and the three of us sat and smoked and talked for some time.

Suddenly, in a slight pause in the conversation, Rata turned to me and asked if I were married, which I answered in the negative.

" Then would you like Te Aitu for your wife ? " she asked.

Instead of answering, I looked hard at the girl, who appeared quite unmoved, as though she had not heard her mother's question. Then I asked her, " What do you say, Aitu ? " But she merely shrugged her shoulders and went on gazing into vacancy.

" Never mind what she says ! " broke in Rata impatiently. " What do you say to her as your wife ? "

I thought of Ngawai, with her laughter and tears, with her open confession of love for me, and what it had cost her. And I compared her with the girl who sat opposite to me now, with her calm, inscrutable face and apparent indifference as to whether I became her husband or not. If Ngawai had been asked by me the same question I had put to Te Aitu, " What sayest thou ? " her eager answer would have been " Ae ! E pai ana ! "

But Te Aitu gave no reply. Apparently she was thinking deeply, as there was a little pucker on her forehead. She looked once at me as if she would read my innermost thoughts and sighed impatiently ; while I eyed her wonderingly and anxiously, for great was my longing for this haughty cousin of Ngatae, with her imperial carriage and disdainful looks.

Suddenly she turned to me and spoke.

" As you know, O Para," she said, " according to Maori custom, it does not rest with me whether I am willing to marry you or not, but you have asked me if I would care for you as a husband. ' What sayest thou ? ' you asked me, but you have not yet said whether you wish me for your wife, so now I ask you, ' What sayest thou ? ' " And she looked earnestly at me.

"Why, of course I want you," I said eagerly, "for very great is my love for you."

"Né koia?" she replied, smiling in a surprised way; "then my answer to you is 'Yes!'" And she held out her hand quite naturally for me to grasp.

So I turned to the impatient Rata and told her what she already knew—that her daughter and I had agreed to marry.

"But, do you know, O Para," said Te Aitu, "that Ngatae's consent must first be obtained? Perhaps you had better see him?"

"Ae, ra!" grunted her mother. "You will have to get the Chief's approval."

Just then a shadow fell across the threshold, and the next moment Ngatae stood in the hut.

"I heard you were here, O Para," he said, "and I wondered why you should choose Rata's house to rest in. But now I think I know," he added, looking meaningly at Te Aitu.

The girl did not return his glance, but continued to gaze out of the little doorway into vacancy.

"I was just coming to speak to you, O Ngatae," I said, "and the subject I would talk of is Te Aitu. Rata has suggested her as a wife for me, and for my own part I shall be glad to possess her. The girl herself seems to be willing, but not overjoyed. (Here Rata snorted and Te Aitu looked whimsically at me.) They tell me I must first of all get your consent to our marriage, so I now ask you if you will give it. If you approve, it is good. If you do not approve, the matter is ended. It rests entirely with you."

Ngatae had stood while I was speaking with his eyes on

the ground and with his hands clasped behind him. I heard him mutter to himself, " He speaks just like a Maori." Then he turned to me and said, " As far as I am concerned, I am quite willing and glad that you should wed my kinswoman, but the approval of her other relatives must also be obtained. I will send out to fetch them in, in order that they may discuss the matter this evening."

With that he strode away from the hut, calling to the two women to follow him.

CHAPTER XX

I MARRY TE AITU

THERE was a goodly assemblage of people in Ngatae's house when I was sent for that evening, and most of them were strangers to me. They stared curiously as I entered and muttered one to another, but I could not catch what they said. Probably they were criticising my personal appearance, I thought, so I put on what I considered my nicest expression and sat down where Ngatae told me, between him and Te Aitu.

I felt Tohiora's horrible, hypnotic eyes fixed on me all the time, but he did not succeed in sending me to sleep. Kongé was smiling as usual in an unconcerned way, and his wife caught my eye and winked loudly. She was sitting next to Aorere, and the two kept up a running fire of chaff during most of the ceremony.

It was quite evident there was going to be considerable opposition to my candidature. The first serious objection was the colour of my skin.

"It is not meet," said a Maori who somewhat resembled the Wild Man of Borneo, "that Te Aitu, who is the daughter of a great Chief, should wed a pakeha whose face has no more colour than the moon." And many others agreed with him.

"How would it do to tattoo him all over?" suggested Kongé drily. "Then no one could tell what his skin was like."

At this, Te Aitu bit her lips and looked angry, while Aorere and Amohaere screamed with laughter.

Eventually it was decided to pass on to the second difficulty, which was that I was a Government man, and therefore in league with liars who broke the Treaty of Waitangi.

"Lo!" said one, "Para will learn our secrets from his wife, and will pass them on to the Government at Poneke; so we shall no longer be safe."

"Kahore!" said Te Aitu quietly, "Para is not like that."

"No," agreed Ngatae, "Para is as a Maori in his ways and thoughts."

So that objection was overlooked, and the next one launched by no less a person than Wahanui, who gravely informed Te Aitu's relatives that I already had a wife and three children living in Whakatu (Nelson). He had heard this for a fact from a friend of his, whose cousin had learnt it from another man who had actually seen me waving farewell from the deck of a steamer to the said wife and children, who had come down to the wharf to see me off.

"Three children!" exclaimed a woman. "E hara i te hanga!"

"Perhaps there are four by now," said another, "for white people have big families."

"Or perhaps five," giggled Amohaere, "for the last birth may have been twins."

"Peace!" shouted Wahanui. "What answer do you make, O Para?"

"It is all false, O Wahanui," I answered as gravely as

I could. "I have no wife and no children. Your friend was altogether wrong in his statement."

"We have only the white man's word for it," snarled the Witch-doctor.

"That is quite sufficient for me," said Ngatae sharply.

"And for me too," calmly added Te Aitu.

So Tohiora the priest "retired hurt."

But what really carried the day was my ancestry, which is the most important point of all with Maoris. When questioned on the subject, I told them that my father was a General officer and that all my forbears had been soldier-chiefs for very many generations.

At this they exclaimed in great wonder and admiration, for the Maoris are staunch ancestor worshippers, and if a man's "tupuna" (as they call ancestors) have not been gentle folk, he is secretly despised by the natives of New Zealand. They have often asked me about the tupuna of different Government Ministers, and when I have answered that they were just ordinary working-men, as indeed was generally the case, they have been filled with astonishment and contempt.

So when I gave them my pedigree, they were highly delighted, especially Ngatae, who was a great believer in rank.

"It is good," he said gravely, "that the descendant of a race of soldier-chiefs should wed Te Aitu, for her tupuna also have been warrior-chiefs from time immemorial."

"I expect their children will be born with the war-paint on," said Amohaere demurely.

"And instead of crying like babies," added Aorere with a laugh, "they will be chanting a battle-song like this." And she thereupon started in a low tone to sing a fierce

song of defiance and hatred, which was immediately taken up by the others as though in earnest, especially by the backwoodsmen, most of whom had never seen a white man before. In a flash they became like demons, and when the first verse was finished one of the men shouted out, " Pakia, kia rite ! " which means " Slap, to keep time ! " And they all sprang to their feet and slapped their thighs in perfect unison. Then came another order, " Kokiri kei waho," and their hands shot out, palms downward, open, flat and quivering. Then the final " Takahia ! " and each one stamped lustily with the right foot. After this, came the song, punctuated by loud slaps on the chest, all done like clockwork, with the thuds of the naked feet going the whole time.

With the exception of Ngatae, who merely beat time with his hands, all my intended relatives, as well as the Witch-doctor, took part in the actions.

Te Aitu was among them, stamping with her foot like the rest, and throwing out her hands with gusto. But she did not look fierce like the others. Instead she smiled all through the piece and laughed merrily when she caught my eye. I noticed that her hands and feet were those of an aristocrat, slender and delicate.

The song ended up with a loud, simultaneous " Awé ! " and they all sank back on the mats looking rather ashamed. The Witch-doctor, however, was an exception. There was no shame about him He continued to look ferocious after he had sat down.

" There is one more question to ask you, O Para," said the Chief, " and it is this : Will you promise always to be faithful to Te Aitu, and never have anything to do with any other woman so long as she is alive ? "

" I promise that gladly, O Ngatae," I answered.

" Then, O people of Tuhua, relatives of my cousin Te Aitu ! " cried the Chief, in a loud, clear voice, " are you willing that this white man, Para, shall be the husband of Te Aitu ? "

And they all shouted " Ae ! " with one voice. That is, all except Tohiora the priest, and as he was not related to the bride, his dissent did not much matter, except that it destroyed the harmony of the meeting.

As a matter of fact, he was in a towering rage, and after Ngatae had solemnly addressed Te Aitu and myself to tell us we were duly married, Tohiora stood up and cursed me. He then predicted that our marriage would not last long, but would soon be ended by Death.

Then I also grew angry and told the Witch-doctor what I thought of him.

" Lo ! " I said, " you are like a walking volcano, emitting smoke and fire as Tongariro does. But have a care what you say about my wife, for if any harm comes to her through you, you shall surely answer for it."

Then, seeing that Te Aitu looked frightened, I called to her and took her away to the hut which had been given us.

" Why so afraid, sweetheart ? " I asked jokingly when we were outside. " Tohiora cannot harm us with that long tongue of his."

" No, but he will in other ways, O Para," said Te Aitu. ' What he says he means, and whatever he predicts is sure to come to pass. He is never known to fail when his wrath is kindled." And she clutched my hand as we crossed the marae.

" Shall I go back and punch his head ? " I asked her.

"It would please me more than anything." Which was true, for I loathed the beast as much as I did Porou.

But this she would not hear of. Clinging closely to me, she implored me to leave Tohiora alone, saying that her people would kill me if I laid hands on the Witch-doctor.

So I left him alone, but if I had known the harm he was going to work on us, I think I would have been justified in shooting him.

I asked Te Aitu later on what she intended doing on the morrow when I rode away to Te Awamutu.

"Why, ride with you, of course," she replied. "I have horses of my own, as well as much land, for my father was a well-to-do chief. I will see that there are two horses here to-morrow for us to ride."

"But where will you stop on the road?" I queried.

"Wherever you stop, I will stay with you, excepting, of course, at the white man's town of Te Awamutu. I will await you just this side of there, at a Maori village I know of. I have been through before, O Para, and know the road well. Besides, I have friends all the way who will welcome us."

This was good news to me, as I wanted a guide, and did not wish to leave my wife behind while Tohiora was strutting around in a rage.

So it was settled, and the following day the two of us rode off on a pair of fairly decent horses belonging to Te Aitu, who rode astride on a man's saddle. And at Taringamotu I made the acquaintance of Kahu, whose song of welcome almost made me blush, and caused Te Aitu to snort contemptuously.

They were very hospitable to us at Taringamotu and everywhere else where we stayed, but I shall never forget

Kahu's remarks and innuendoes that evening. Her husband slept most of the time, as Amohaere had prophesied he would.

"I don't like Kahu," said Te Aitu drowsily to me just before she went to sleep. "She is cruel, although she laughs so much. I wish she had married the Witch-doctor instead of that owl."

CHAPTER XXI

TROUBLE ABOUT HINEWHIU

The Government sent as my assistant a man called Ellis, and I found him waiting for me at Te Awamutu. He was tall and well set up, a good deal older than myself and married, with a young family settled in one of the towns. His relationship to the Chief Engineer had procured him the post, although he could not speak three words of the Maori language.

I started him with a gang of men to mark out the proposed railway route, following in my tracks, and as it was almost level country there was not much difficulty, except for the swamps, which were almost fathomless.

The men from Tuhua came up and joined Ellis' crowd, but I kept Hardy for myself, and he and I, and sometimes Te Aitu, travelled about together.

My intention, however, is not to write of my work on the proposed railway, but of the Maoris, with whom Fate brought me into contact when I opened up their country to the Europeans, and thus destroyed their nationality.

In time we came back to Taumarunui, and Ellis pitched his camp close to Matahanea. Te Aitu did not like the man. She did not like white men in general, but in particular had taken a great dislike to Ellis, whom she

considered a bully, as indeed he was to the men under him. He seemed, however, afraid of the Maoris, who treated him with contemptuous indifference as far as the men were concerned, but unfortunately several of the women admired him. The widows used to say so quite openly and express their wish that he could speak the Maori language. However, he avoided them carefully.

But one day, some months after Ellis's arrival, Te Aitu told me something which rather alarmed me.

"Do you know," she began, and whenever my wife commenced a speech with those three words, I always knew there was something important to follow—something which had caused her much thought. So I sat up and listened.

"Do you know," said she, "that Hinewhiu, wife of Porou, cares for Ellis, and that Ellis seems to care for her?"

"No, I don't know it," I answered, "and I certainly hope it is not true, for Porou is a violent man. Besides, Ellis has a wife and children in the town."

"Well, you watch them, Para, and see if my words are not true. Hinewhiu is a beautiful woman, and Ellis knows it. If they get their wish and Porou hears of it, he can take all Ellis's belongings, for such is the Maori law. He will also in all probability kill Hinewhiu."

She told me this while we were strolling in the evening towards Matahanea, where Porou lived with his wife and child.

We found nearly all the inhabitants of the village squatting about outside Whakapaki's house, smoking hard as usual and listening to what the Chief was saying.

He sang out to us that he was just going to tell the story of how the first dog came into existence, so we had to sit

down and listen, although Te Aitu whispered to me that she had heard the tale " as many times as there are days in a moon."

" Very well, then," said Whakapaki, emphasising his points by striking the palm of one hand with the fist of the other, " it was like this :

" The great god Maui, who as you know dragged up Aotearoa and Waipounamu at the end of his line out of the sea when fishing from his canoe, went hunting one day with a slave called Kuri. They hunted for a very long time, but found nothing. Presently they came to a place in the ridge along which they were travelling where it became two ridges, one branching to the right and one to the left, but running side by side. And Maui said to Kuri, ' Lo ! I will proceed along the right-hand ridge, while you follow along the left-hand one, and if either of us comes across a beast, he will call to the other, who must hasten to his help.'

" And Kuri said, ' I have heard your words, O Maui, and they are good.'

" So they went along hunting for food, Maui to the right and Kuri to the left. Presently Maui came across a huge, fierce animal, so he called to Kuri to come across to help him to slay it. But Kuri was lazy and would take no notice of his master's voice ; instead he lay down and rested.

" Then Maui was angry with his slave, and having called him three times without any effect he whistled to him, and lo ! the slave was forthwith turned into a dog which ran barking across to Maui. And all dogs are descended from that Kuri and a mate which Maui found for him. So now every dog is called ' kuri ' after the disobedient slave."

"Koia ano!" exclaimed the listening Maoris. "Served the lazy fellow right!"

Old Hokimai, who had apparently not washed since I first saw him, was loudest in his praises of the story, which he had doubtless heard several times before from the same source. But then Whakapaki was a Chief, and Hokimai was a sycophant.

"Watch Hinewhiu's face when I speak," whispered Te Aitu to me. Then she raised her voice and asked me if Ellis was a married man.

As I answered her in the affirmative I saw Hinewhiu change colour and look fearfully at her husband.

"Yes," I said, "he has a wife and three children in town."

"I do not like him," said my wife firmly, looking hard at Hinewhiu.

"Like him!" echoed Porou. "One does not like pigs except to eat. All white men are pigs and ought to be killed." And the fellow glared at me when he said it, for he hated me with a deadly hatred, and would, I knew, think nothing of sending me to the next world if he had the chance. But he would not do it so long as there were witnesses of the crime. Te Aitu had told me that.

"Never turn your back on him if there is no one else near," she warned me. "And be careful of Takirau! He murdered Moffatt, and he would murder you if Porou told him to."

"Well, am I right or am I wrong about Porou's wife?" Te Aitu asked me after we had left Matahanea and were strolling homewards.

"Ka tika tau," I answered. "Hinewhiu has a fancy for Ellis right enough, but we don't know that he cares for her. Anyhow, I wish the man had never come here."

"So do I, with all my heart," said my wife. "Very great is my wish that no white man had ever set foot in Tuhua."

"How about me, then?" I asked.

"Oh, you are different," she replied. "You have lived so long among the Maoris that you have become as one of ourselves. Do you know, O husband, we have been married nearly a year?"

"It seems like a week to me," I said, laughing. "Are you sorry you married me, sweetheart?"

"No!" she said gravely, "I am very, very glad. But do you know, O Para, I do not think we shall be happy much longer. I always remember Tohiora's words the day we were married, and he looks at me when we meet with those awful eyes of his, as if he would compel me to do something against my will. He never forgives or forgets. Aué! my heart is sad!"

"Nonsense!" I said. "Make a face at Tohiora when you meet him. That will show him you are not frightened." And I tried to laugh her out of her fear.

"Aue!" was her only answer. "I am afraid, O Para." And she kept on sighing until we got to Ngatae's house, where all was noise and laughter.

"Here come the married sweethearts!" screamed Amohaere when she saw us. "Where are the babies with the war-paint on? They are a long time coming to see us! Anana! but you have a good husband, O Itu," she said to my wife; "very different to mine, who wanders round looking for other women every day."

"Ae! and he finds them too!" cried a comely widow called Raukura, whose husband had died about a month before.

" One does not need to look far to find you," said Kongé placidly.

At this there was a shout of laughter, which made the widow wish she had kept silent.

" Never mind, Raukura," said Te Aitu in her deep, clear voice. " You will soon get another husband, and then Kongé will have to keep his mouth shut."

" Yes," giggled Aorere, " the widow can always get Hokimai for a husband."

This caused more mirth, amid which Raukura walked out, snorting indignantly.

" I have heard, O Para," said Ngatae, " that some of your people do not like the talk which Maoris indulge in. They say that almost the whole of our conversation is about women and their lovers. But if we talk not of such things, what else are we to chatter about ? One day is like another with us. Sometimes we go pig-hunting, at other times we canoe down the river or shoot and snare birds. But nearly always we are here making fun of one another. And what is there more likely to cause laughter than love-making on the sly ? "

" You are quite right, O Ngatae," I answered ; " and most of the white people think the same, only they do not chaff openly as the Maoris do ; they speak evil of others behind their backs."

" E ! kei nga pakeha ! " said Te Aitu bitterly. " They are an evil race."

" E ! kei to tane (husband)," mocked Ata. " He also is a pakeha."

" Para has the skin of a pakeha," replied Te Aitu, " but his heart is that of a Maori."

" Ka tika tau, e Itu," chorused the others.

Then the ever-jealous Ata tried to upset the harmony by saying that when Aorere became a widow she would not be difficult to find if a man were looking for her.

" She would be even as Kongé says that Raukura is now," said the woman who never laughed.

" What is that to you ? " snapped Aorere.

" Kahore ! " sneered Ata. " But I notice you do not walk alone now as you used. Have your legs got too weak to carry you far ? "

" When the time comes, I will tell Ngatae why I went alone day after day," said Aorere calmly, " and Ngatae will say that what I did was right."

But Ngatae, who listened intently, said nothing.

CHAPTER XXII

THE STORM BURSTS

My work took me far afield, and I had to keep moving so as to get things into working order and to be in touch with the different sections. When in Taumarunui, which was my headquarters, I spent much time in drawing out plans and corresponding with the Government. In addition to my engineering work, I was a sort of ambassador of a foreign power, resident in Maoriland, and had to keep a firm but delicate hand on Maori machinations. In this, of course, I received invaluable help from my wife, and managed to steer a middle course which seemed to please both parties.

I was away from my headquarters for some days subsequent to the events narrated in my last chapter, and arriving back one afternoon with Hardy, who usually accompanied me on my expeditions, the two of us went to my little house expecting to find Te Aitu there and a meal ready to be cooked. Instead, the place was empty. But we soon lit a fire, and got ourselves some food and a " billy " of tea, and then strolled over to Matahanea, where they told me my wife was to be found.

When we came near the village we coo-eed, and the crazy girl Te Rehe paddled over and took us across in a canoe. She seemed excited and anxious.

"There is trouble on to-night, O friends," she jabbered, as she tied up the "waka."

"What is the trouble about, Rehe?" asked Hardy.

"About Hinewhiu and the white man Ellis," she replied. "Porou is like a devil in his wrath. Aué! but he is angry!"

So we pushed on quickly, the three of us, until we got close to the marae, where we saw a big crowd of natives, amongst whom was Te Aitu, sitting in a circle round a huge fire, and in the circle was Ellis, with the starch all gone out of him. I have seldom seen a white man look more scared than he did on this occasion.

Near him sat Porou, and next to Porou sat his wife Hinewhiu, with a shocking black eye.

Porou was accusing Ellis of something, more by signs than words, for, as I have said, Ellis knew not Maori, and, in answer to the accusation, he was simply saying "No!" over and over again, sometimes varied by "No fear," or "Kahore," which is the Maori word for "No." He saw me, but did not ask me to interpret for him.

Then Porou turned his attention to his wife, and told her in forceful language what he thought of her. Hinewhiu, between her sobs, said the story about her and Ellis was a lie. At which her husband struck her across the face with his arm, knocking her sideways on to the ground, where she lay moaning.

"Shall I go in and hammer him, sir?" asked Hardy.

"Not on your life, Hardy!" I answered. "Depend on it, there is a lot of truth in the charge. Let Mr. Ellis fight it out, for it serves him right. I have warned him not to tamper with Maori wives."

Just then Porou called on a boy of about fifteen years old to give evidence.

" Witness for the prosecution, sir," whispered Hardy.

The boy who had been called stood up and recited his version of the matter. It appeared that he and several others, including Porou and his wife, had been sleeping the night before, owing to the heat, in the wharé runanga, where anyone may spend the night. It was moonlight, unfortunately, and Ellis's tent was not far off.

" Lo ! " said the boy, " I awoke in the middle of the night, and I saw Hinewhiu rise up quietly from the side of her husband and steal, like a snake, across to the tent where the white man Ellis lay. Then A-a-a-a-a," he went on, holding up his hand to denote the length of time, and as he dropped his hand he went on, " she came out again and stole back to her husband's side."

Then Porou's fury broke loose. Hinewhiu screamed, and Ellis kept on shouting " Kahore " for all he was worth.

" Here comes the missus, sir," said Hardy, as Te Aitu came quickly towards us.

" Make haste ! " she cried, as soon as she reached us. " Take the instruments out of Ellis's tent before Porou gets there ! "

" Right you are ! " said Hardy, and the three of us ran to the tent and got the Government things out quickly and transferred the " legs " of the theodolite and level to Tovey's tent, while Hardy and I shouldered the rest.

Luckily, the men had gone away eel-catching—all but Tovey, who was sleeping peacefully and probably dreaming of Bath. So we just stowed the things under his bunk without his knowing.

" They won't look in the porangi's tent," said Te Aitu. " Now come, both of you, quickly and quietly ! " she added.

So we stole round to the river-crossing by a circuitous route, paddled over and walked home by moonlight to our hut, where we deposited the " devil things," as the Maoris called them.

" Wonder what Porou will do next ? " said Hardy. " I reckon Mr. Ellis won't get much sleep to-night. What do you think will happen to Hinewhiu ? " he asked Te Aitu.

" Aué ! " said my wife, " my heart is sad for her. You white men have brought naught but sorrow to Tuhua, O Hati."

" It strikes me the women are just as much to blame as the men," laughed Hardy. " It takes two to make a love affair."

" Ae ! Ka tika tau, e Hati," giggled Te Aitu. " But Ngatae will be angry when he hears of it, and he does not like Ellis."

So we tramped on in single file, with Te Aitu between us, until we came to Taumarunui. As we got near Ngatae's house we could hear much talking going on inside, with occasional sounds of anger.

" Seems to me like a case of ' out of the frying-pan into the fire,' " laughed Hardy. " I hope Toby has not been making love to Ata ! "

" What does Hati say ? " asked my wife, and laughed in high glee when I told her. " Ke ! " she said. " Just fancy the porangi making love to the woman who never laughs."

Then we stole into Ngatae's house, unnoticed by reason of the noise and smoke.

At least twenty people were speaking all at once, and the only person who looked unconcerned was Kongé, who was smiling sweetly as he picked out a hot ash from the fire to put in his pipe. Then he lapsed into pleasant thought, as if he took no interest in the concerns of others.

Suddenly Ngatae stood up, and all was silent. It was a great transition from deafening hubbub to dead stillness. We three sat in the background, close together, with Te Aitu between us two white men. My wife had a great regard for Hardy and liked his jolly, open ways, while Hardy thought no end of her. " She is a wise and good woman, sir," he used to say to me : " you can see it in her face." So we three now sat close together and waited breathlessly to hear what the Chief had to say.

" O friends ! " began Ngatae, " my heart is sad by reason of all that has been said about Aorere."

(" Ke ! " whispered Te Aitu, " it is Ata's doing.")

" Many moons ago," went on the Chief, " it was said that she was false to me, that she had a lover whom she used to meet often when alone. But I did not believe it. I put it down to jealousy on the part of Ata. Once I followed Aorere along the road leading to the Sacred Mountain, but found her not, and when I returned she was sitting here. It was the woman Haria who first spread the story, and it was Ata who seized on it, even as a dog seizes on a bone to find out what meat hangs to it, for there is no hatred like that of a jealous woman. She spoke openly of Aorere's wanderings alone in search of a lover, and never once did Aorere contradict her. But suddenly Aorere went no more abroad, and so the tongue of Ata was stilled and my heart was glad.

" But now the boy Muru has spoken."

("Another boy spy," whispered Hardy, and Te Aitu nodded.)

"Muru," said the Chief, "has to-day seen Aorere on the track along which I followed her, talking to a Maori man. The boy was not near enough to discover who the man was or what he was like, save that he was tall. Can none of you find me this man that I may slay him as well as Aorere?"

And the Chief looked round appealingly to his people, who sat with downcast eyes, all save Aorere, who had never taken her eyes from Ngatae's face. Now, when he finished his speech by stating his intention to slay her, she sprang up with a look of fierce anger on her face.

CHAPTER XXIII

AORERE VINDICATES HERSELF

"THEN kill me, O Ngatae!" cried Aorere. "Kill me now, and have done with it! For I would fain die, now that I know your heart is turned from me. You listen to Ata, you listen to Haria, you listen to Muru, you listen to all who speak against me; but you never listen to me! Have you ever asked me if I am guilty? Not once! Instead, you follow me with stealthy tread, to see if you can find me in the arms of another man. And you are my husband! Lo! I saw you creeping along noiselessly, ready to kill my lover or me. My lover! I have no lover. I have only a husband who once was a lover. Now he wants to kill me.

"Listen now, ye people of Tuhua, and I will tell you the story of my doings! Many moons ago I overheard a man of our tribe talking with another man and a youth who are also of our people, and the first man said he knew where Moffatt's treasure lay, and he told the other two, who are as mud in his hands, to go with him the next day when the sun was high, and he would show them the treasure, and the two could then read what was written on certain papers which were hidden there with the other things, as he himself could not read.

"So they went, and I followed them along the road

towards the Sacred Mountain. When they had gone a great distance from here, they turned off from the track to the right side, down a slope leading to a little river. About half-way down there is a small cave, concealed under brushwood, and into this they went. And I stole softly after them on my hands and knees in the fern, fearful lest they should find me.

" After a time they came out, and I heard them talking angrily about Ngatae, saying he had sold our lands to the white men, as his name was on the papers which Moffatt had left there.

" And I grew frightened and crept away through the fern a long distance, until I came to the track from Matahanea, where, seeing no one was in sight, I ran back to this place. Then Haria and Ata taunted me with having been to meet a lover, and Ngatae did not bid them cease. So I was angry and would not tell of what I had seen and heard at the cave.

" The next day I went again, but found two of the men there, so I could not get the papers which Moffatt had left. And very often afterwards did I journey to the hiding-place, but each time I was prevented from gaining my object. Once, however, I heard the men say that Ngatae merited death if he had truly signed away the land. So when the messengers came that night to tell us of the coming of the white man Para to Manganui-a-te-ao, and our people were angry, I tried to dissuade Ngatae from going amongst them, for I had seen the three evil-hearted men in the crowd with guns in their hands. But Ngatae would go, and was wounded, and I know who fired the shot, for I saw him afterwards run behind the houses with fear on his face and his gun still smoking.

" And after that I stayed away from the cave for a long time, for I was afraid to go there. And no one knew of my secret save one, Amohaere."

" Save two," put in Kongé quietly, " for I also knew it."

" How did you learn it ? " asked Aorere in astonishment.

" From Amohaere," said Kongé. " She talks in her sleep," he added with a laugh, " and that is how I learnt it."

" Koia ano ! and you have kept the secret ! " exclaimed Aorere.

" Evidently Kongé does not talk in his sleep," said Wahanui.

" But to-day, O friends," went on the girl-wife, " I heard that there was trouble in Matahanea over Hinewhiu and the white man Ellis."

" What ! " shouted Ngatae. " Is this true, O Para ? " as he caught sight of me.

" Yes, it is true," I replied gravely.

" Let me finish first ! " cried Aorere. " I knew the three ' nauwhea ' (good-for-nothings) would be at the village, so I hastened to the cave, knowing not that the boy Muru had been sent by Ata to follow me. I met no one on my way there, but when I reached the entrance to the cave, lo ! a strange Maori stood there, and in his hands were the things which Moffatt had left in the hiding-place.

" At first I was afraid, but after he spoke I knew he meant no harm. He told me he was the Maori from Taupo who had stood by Moffatt's side when he was killed by our people, and now he had returned to fetch the things which Moffatt had left behind in Tuhua. So I asked him, ' Have you the papers also ? ' and he said ' Yes.' Then I said, ' Give me the papers, for they are of no use to you, but have caused much trouble in our land, for some of our

people have seen them and are trying to prove that Ngatae used them to sign away our country.' 'And what would you do with them?' he asked; and I told him I would hand them to Ngatae, my husband. So he gave them to me, and I said, 'It is good. Now return to your people.'

"So he went over the hill towards Moerangi, after saying, 'Go back to your husband and give him the papers.'

"So I sped back here with the papers, which are for you, O Ngatae," and she flung them at his feet.

"Now, where is my lover, O Ata? Where is my lover, O Haria? Where is the lover you saw me with, O Muru? Presently devils will come and take the three of you away with them." And she sat down, flushed and panting.

Ngatae opened the papers, one by one—there were four altogether—and having looked them over casually, passed them on to Wahanui.

"I know nothing of these writings," he said calmly, "and it is not my signature. But they are for the most part written in English, which is perhaps the reason why the three Maoris have kept them so long, as they probably awaited the chance of some white man translating them, and there is none here able to do it except Para, and him they fear. Now tell me," he said to Aorere, "the names of the three men who tried to work evil on me."

"Lo!" said Aorere, "the names of the two who were as clay in the hands of the man who found Moffat's things are Takirau and Hika. The man who found the things and who fired a shot at you is——"

"Where is Hinewhiu?" shouted a hoarse voice at the doorway.

"That is the man, O Ngatae," cried out Aorere—"the man called Porou."

"Where is Hinewhiu?" repeated Porou angrily.

"Aua!" said several women. "She has not been here to-night."

"Where is Takirau?" asked Kongé ironically. "And where is Hika?"

"He aha mau?" answered Porou fiercely, and turned to go.

A low cry broke from Te Aitu. "He has a gun in his hand, Para!"

Then Ngatae's voice rang out. "I want to speak to you, Porou. Come up close!"

"Who are you that you should order me?" shouted Porou in reply. "I am going to seek my wife." And he made as if to leave.

"Don't let him go!" cried Ngatae, and in an instant half a dozen men were holding Porou, while he struggled fiercely with them.

As I have said before, he was a very powerful man, added to which he had the ferocity of a wild animal. He actually succeeded in flinging off his captors for a moment, and in that moment he picked up his gun and took rapid aim at Ngatae; but, quick as he was, I was quicker and knocked up the barrel of his gun just as he fired, so that the bullet sped harmlessly over Ngatae's head. He turned on me in a fury, but Hardy had him round the neck from behind, and the others coming to the rescue, we succeeded in laying Porou on his back.

"Tie his hands!" ordered Ngatae, "and take him to the prison-house. Keep guard on him all night, lest he escape me. I will deal with him in the morning."

So they dragged him away, struggling and cursing, and a dead silence fell on us all, which Aorere was the first to break.

" There goes one of my lovers," she cried bitterly, looking hard at Ata. " There are still two more to catch, Takirau and Hika."

She said it in such a matter-of-fact way that for the life of me I could not help laughing aloud.

" Aorere talks of lovers as if she were Kahu," giggled Amohaere. " Only I don't think Kahu would be satisfied with the three Tuhua men," she added thoughfully. " I am almost sure she would have made love to Moffatt's friend from Taupo. She always preferred strangers, because the others knew her too well."

" I should say, sir," said Hardy, " that Kahu's husband has about the best time of it of any of the Maoris I have met round here. He is Chief of the village of Taringamotu, but Kahu does his part for him. No one is jealous of him, and if there is any extra trouble, he goes to sleep."

" Ke ! " exclaimed Te Aitu impatiently. " This English language is like the twittering of birds. Speak Maori, O Hati ! "

So I translated what Hardy had said, which made Amohaere sit up.

" You are wrong, O Hati ! " she said. " Whaterangi is very unhappy, for he has told me so. If he were a white man, he would drink stinking water (spirits) to make him forget Kahu's temper, but instead he sleeps or feigns to sleep."

" Anyhow," said Ngatae, " no one tries to shoot him, like they try to shoot me."

" That is because you are great, O Chief," explained

Wahanui. "You are as a king over all this land, and so men are jealous of your power. The rarer the bird, the more anxious the hunter to secure it. No one wishes to supplant Whaterangi."

"Especially if it means marrying Kahu," said Kongé; and most of us laughed, in spite of our worrying about Porou and his wife and his fellow-conspirators.

While we remained at Ngatae's house, men were coming and going between there and the guard-house; and before we left the headmen had been fetched in by messengers to consult with Ngatae and Wahanui about the Moffatt papers and the fate of Porou.

Among others who arrived was Whakapaki from Matahanea with his wife Rangi. These brought me a note from Ellis, saying that he would shift camp at dawn, which showed he was all right. He made no mention of the Hinewhiu business.

Whakapaki said all was quiet at Matahanea, but Hinewhiu had disappeared with her child He, of course, knew about Porou, as Ngatae's messengers had told him.

Rangi was whispering to Te Aitu while I spoke to the Chief, and I asked my wife afterwards what the woman had said.

"Ellis gave money to Porou, O Para," said Te Aitu. "Rangi thinks it was five pounds, and she said Porou took things from Ellis's tent, so it was lucky we removed the Government instruments, as Ellis was too frightened to stop him."

As she finished speaking, Hardy held up his hand and said, "Listen a moment! I believe there is someone in your hut."

So we stole in and lit the candle, and discovered Hine-

whiu and her child asleep in a corner on a mat, with one of our blankets thrown over them.

"Aué!" whispered Te Aitu. "It is lucky Porou did not find her."

Then she got more blankets and put over them, while tears ran down her cheeks. Hinewhiu was moaning in her sleep, and it was evident she had been crying bitterly. The child was clasped tightly in her arms, with its little face against hers, near to where a ghastly bruise showed up.

We tiptoed out into the bright moonlight, where Hardy gave his opinion of Porou in forcible language, both in English and Maori. But Te Aitu did not wholly agree.

"Porou is bad, O Hati," she said, with a troubled look on her sweet-serious face, "but no man likes his wife to be stolen away. Ellis is the cause of all this trouble He made love to Hinewhiu! What would he do if another man made love to his wife? Aué! but my heart is sad for Hinewhiu. Porou has suffered in his pride, Ellis has suffered in his pocket, but Hinewhiu has been beaten like a dog, and is fleeing for her life. Aué! Aué!"

Then my wife and I said "Good-night" to Hardy, and turned in quietly, so as not to wake Hinewhiu or her child.

"What do you think Ngatae will do to Porou?" I asked Te Aitu, just before she fell asleep.

"Why, shoot him, of course," she replied drowsily. "If Ngatae does not shoot Porou, Porou will shoot Ngatae."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE END OF POROU

"HINEWHIU has gone, O Para!" said Te Aitu, shaking me at dawn the next day. "Wake up, that we may follow her to tell her she is safe, for she does not know Porou is a prisoner!"

I sprang out of bed and looked. Sure enough, the woman had fled with her child.

"Why on earth did she not wait and ask us what she ought to do?" I exclaimed.

"She was perhaps afraid lest Porou should come here to look for her. Probably she is hiding in the bush, and we must find her and bring her back. I expect I know where she has gone."

"All right!" I said. "Let us have our breakfast, and then we will go and hunt for her and her baby."

But things did not go so smoothly as I anticipated, for soon after we had finished our meal, my wife called out to me that she had seen Hardy running towards our wharé from the direction of Ngatae's house, and she feared bad news. So we waited for him just outside in silent expectation, with Te Aitu's long, slender fingers clasping my hand.

"Porou has escaped, sir!" said Hardy when he drew near, and I felt my wife's fingers twitch as she heard him.

"When they took his food to him this morning, they found only the guard lying stunned in the prison-house. Porou must have felled him when he went to inspect during the night, and then made off quietly, taking the sentry's gun with him."

"Koia, kei Ngatae! He will be shot if Porou sees him!" cried Te Aitu.

"Ngatae has gone after him alone, with a loaded gun," said Hardy. "He would not allow anyone to go with him. I don't envy Porou if the Chief catches up to him."

"Aué! poor Hinewhiu, if Porou catches up to her!" said my wife, wringing her hands.

"What! Has Hinewhiu gone too?" said Hardy.

"Alas, yes!" replied Te Aitu. "She must have gone at daybreak before we were awake."

"Yes, she has gone right enough with her child," I added, "and what is more, I am going after her to try to prevent her being murdered. You can come if you like, Hardy."

"Of course, sir," he said in a pleased way.

So I translated my plans into Maori for my wife's benefit. Then I handed Hardy one of my revolvers and, taking the other myself, we prepared to start up the river the way Ngatae had gone.

"E noho, e Itu!" I called out.

"E ki good-bye!" she mocked, as she ran ahead of us, nosing about for Ngatae's tracks.

"Come on!" she cried presently. "I know the way they have gone. Fancy you thinking I was going to stay behind, O Para!"

"But there may be danger," I expostulated.

"Meaha!" she replied. "If there is danger for me,

there is danger for you. Besides, I know the way Hinewhiu would go, and you don't."

"So that's that, I suppose, eh, Hardy?"

"Yes, sir, and depend on it the missus is right. I never knew her wrong yet in her judgment," replied the man with a laugh.

So we three made the best of our way along the north bank of the river, moving as swiftly as we could through the high fern, and sometimes climbing up through patches of bush where the river encroached on the lower lying land.

It was toilsome work, but we did not want to be sighted by the dwellers in Matahanea. We heard them once or twice calling out to each other when we were opposite the village, and once we saw what looked like a boy running towards there from the direction we were heading for.

When we reached a soft part of the narrow track Te Aitu stooped down to examine the footprints, waving to us to keep back until she had finished her examination.

"One, two, three people," she said finally. "Look, O friends! This is a woman's footmark—Hinewhiu's, of course, as it is fresh; there is Porou's, big and sprawling; and this is Ngatae's with much weight thrown on the front part of the foot, for his is a springy walk. The Chief is not far ahead, so we must move quietly lest he see us and turn us back in his anger at being followed."

After a time we reached the summit of a slight rise in the open, whence we could see for some distance ahead. Here we paused for a space and looked round.

"I see a man over there," suddenly exclaimed Te Aitu. "Look quickly, O friends, before he enters the bush—there, to the right of the nikau palm tree!" she said, pointing. "It is Porou! I can tell him by the red in his clothing."

Just then Hardy and I both saw him as he turned round to ascertain if he was being followed. Then he disappeared among the trees.

"He is making for the clearing where the 'pataka' stands," said Te Aitu eagerly. "I expect Hinewhiu has gone there, too, for food, which is usually kept there. But where is Ngatae? Ah, there he is!" she cried presently, clutching my shoulder and pointing. "Close behind Porou! Do you see him, O Para? Over there, Hati, in that clump of 'tü' (cabbage trees), stooping low and running swiftly."

"Yes, I can see him plainly," said Hardy; and so also could I.

"Come on quickly!" said my wife, and the three of us ran down the slope and up the incline towards the bush. Te Aitu, with her slim, graceful figure, short skirt and bare legs, could run like a hare, and it took us all our time to keep up with her. We dodged through the "manuka" which here grew thickly. It is a white flowering shrub which flourishes almost everywhere in New Zealand and is useful for bedding and brooms and many other things, but it was only a hindrance to us on this occasion. After passing the spot where we had seen Ngatae, we went more slowly, so as not to overtake the Chief, and in time reached the narrow track where Porou had stopped to have his last look round before leaving the open country.

Here Te Aitu put her finger to her lips, enjoining silence, and then moved quietly into the bush, with myself going next and Hardy behind me.

So we went on along the narrow path, which was little more than a pig-track, for may be a quarter of a mile, when we saw the clearing a little way ahead. Then Te Aitu left the track and crept to the right through the under-

growth, which here was not very dense, the two of us following her as noiselessly as we could, until we all three were looking out on to the open space in the bush which the Maoris call a " mānia." In the centre, or thereabouts, stood a " pataka," or storehouse, which is like a miniature hut, placed on top of one large, high post made quite round, and polished as smooth as glass, so that rats are unable to get a foothold on it.

Quite close to this pataka sat Hinewhiu feeding her child, and now and again eating a mouthful herself.

We peered out eagerly in all directions, but could see no sign of any other living being. There was an uncanny feeling about it all, and the silence seemed intense. Now and again the shrill whistle of a " tui " (parson-bird) rang out, and once an owl shrieked " More pork," which is the cry the New Zealand owl gives and is the name it is known by to white people in the colony.

Except for these, everything was still, and the woman sat on there, with her eyes fixed on her child.

" I don't like it, sir," whispered Hardy. " Porou may take a long shot at her. What does the missus say ? "

" What do you think ? " I asked my wife. " Shall we go in and protect her ? "

" No ! not yet," she whispered back. " Perhaps Porou has heard Ngatae, and gone back another way. Anyhow, you would only be shot down before you had got far in the open."

So we waited a few minutes longer, and, for my own part, I hope I may never have such another experience. For I knew Porou's brutal nature, and expected every minute some awful harm to happen to Hinewhiu.

I had almost made up my mind to go forward and persuade Hinewhiu to return with me, when Te Aitu clutched

my arm and pointed with her finger to a figure standing at a spot well on our left, in fact almost opposite, at the edge of the clearing.

"Porou!" she whispered hurriedly. "Do you see him standing there, looking towards Hinewhiu, with his gun in his two hands?"

"Yes, quite plainly," we both answered.

"If he is going to shoot, we must run at him, Hardy," I said, "and fire as we go."

"Right you are, sir," replied Hardy, jamming his hat down tight. "You just give the word."

Porou, meanwhile, was advancing slowly towards his wife, but looking round suspiciously, as if he feared some trap.

"There is Ngatae, following behind Porou, with his gun in readiness," whispered Te Aitu. "Aué! but I am frightened."

Then Hinewhiu turned and saw her husband! With a loud cry of terror she sprang to her feet, holding the child clutched tightly to her.

Porou still moved forward slowly, cocking his gun as he went, with his eyes fixed on his wife. He was evidently trying to find a part of her body which was not protected by the child, which she held firmly before her, knowing Porou would not wish to kill his offspring.

So he drew gradually nearer his intended victim, in complete silence, she on her part uttering no sound. Several times he tried to aim at her, until I could stand it no longer.

"Come on, Hardy!" I cried softly, and the two of us, revolver in hand, ran out quietly and quickly across the grass towards my old enemy Porou. Te Aitu, panting with fear, came swiftly after us. We were half-way to our goal when Ngatae's voice rang out loud and clear.

"E Porou!" he cried, and Porou, who had his gun at the "present," swung round in a flash and fired at Ngatae. Then he threw up his hands and fell forward, with Ngatae's bullet in his brain.

We turned him over when we reached him, Hardy and I, but there was no sign of life in him. Ngatae stood and watched us.

"Is the dog dead?" he asked savagely.

"Yes, he is dead, O Ngatae," I answered, and at that there was a wild burst of wailing from Hinewhiu.

"Peace, woman!" said the Chief. "Would you have him back to kill you?" With that he strode off, saying he would send men to fetch the body.

So we three stood there for a space, looking down at the dead face of Porou, which even now had a look of hatred on it. Hinewhiu was kneeling at the head with great sobs shaking her poor body, while the child clutched her shoulder in fearful wonder.

Presently Te Aitu went and knelt by Hinewhiu's side, putting her arm round the neck of the widowed girl and trying to comfort her.

"You go now, O Para," said my wife—"you and Hati. I will stay here with her until the men come."

So I stooped down and covered the face of Porou with my handkerchief, and went back slowly with Hardy to Taumarunui. On our way we met the stretcher-bearers, with Tohiora the priest at their head. As we stood aside to let them pass, the Witch-doctor, glaring at me, said, "More of your work, white devil!"

For all answer, I called him a liar, which was perhaps rude, but certainly quite true.

CHAPTER XXV

HARDY DOES MOST OF THE TALKING

We trudged along in silence, Hardy and I, for some considerable distance. We had been taking part in a drama in which Death played the principal part, and there had been a doubt all along as to which of six people should be the first to be claimed by him. For Te Aitu ran a great risk as well as ourselves, seeing that she had acted as our guide, and, moreover, was my wife, which was an incentive to Porou to kill her.

It had been a weird business—Hinewhiu fleeing from her husband, Porou following to slay her, Ngatae following to slay Porou, and we three following them all to try to save Hinewhiu.

"It strikes me, sir," said Hardy at length, breaking the silence, "that it would have been a queer go if Porou had killed Ngatae instead of the other way about. I wonder what would have happened in that case?"

"I expect Porou would be lying there just the same," I replied thoughtfully, "with possibly you or me to keep him company."

"Funny things women are!" he went on. "Here is a handsome girl like Hinewhiu, who mostly leads a dog's life at the hands of her husband, and in the end he tries to

kill her. Yet, as soon as she hears he is dead, she starts howling with grief. Blest if I can make it out!"

"And the moral of that is 'Don't interfere between husband and wife.' You never get any thanks for it," I remarked. "But Hinewhiu was within an ace of being killed. She has gone through something for her little escapade! She must wish that boy with insomnia had tried to sleep in some other wharé, or else that he had never been born. And the funny part about Mr. Ellis is that he boasted to me only the other day that no woman on earth could ever induce him to be unfaithful to his wife; and he actually quoted a bit of poetry about 'My Lady Jane is true to me, and I am true to her.'"

"Ah! that's when they are at their worst, sir," said Hardy. "When they take to poetry they are bound to be in love with something fresh. If a man spouts poetry, depend on it, he has got a new sweetheart; and on the other hand, if a woman runs to verse, she has lost someone she cares for. Love brings the disease on men and Death gives it to women."

"At that rate Hinewhiu must be due for an attack, Hardy. But who is the Maori on the rise there? Looks to me like Tupu."

"That's just who it is, sir," said Hardy, "with his head all bandaged up as if he had been having a love quarrel, too."

Tupu was a very short, thick-set Maori, with a gift for making up impossible stories which found much favour among some of his friends. His name, strangely enough, signifies "to grow," so presumably he was called Tupu in irony, seeing that he was not much taller than a dwarf. He was powerfully built, though, for all that.

It turned out that he was posted there to watch for the coming of the funeral party, in order to advise the people in Matahanea when it had left the bush. He was very pleased to see me, as his supply of tobacco had run out, and he was also glad to have someone to talk to, for he was never happy unless he was saying something.

I noticed he did not mention Porou's name, which showed it was now "tapu" among the Maoris. He simply asked me where and when I had met Tohiora and the others, and how long I thought they would be. Just then we caught sight of them coming out of the bush, so Tupu ran off to the village before I had time to ask him about his bandages. It was just as well, perhaps, I did not, as it turned out he was the guard who was felled by Porou in the prison-house on the previous night, and the bandages were the result.

There were great preparations going on in Matahanea when we reached that village. The women were twining leaves in their hair as a sign of mourning, while heaps of food were being cooked in the ovens.

"It looks as if they were going to have a proper 'wake' over Porou," said Hardy. "I wonder Ngatae allows it."

"I don't suppose he worries over it," I replied, "so long as he is not expected to be chief mourner."

Just then Whakapaki came up to me and asked quietly for particulars of the death of Porou. These I gave him on his strict assurance that they should go no farther.

"You need have no fear, O Para," he said, "for Ngatae has 'tapu' the name of Porou for ever. He will not allow the body to be taken to Taumarunui, but there will be a 'tangi' when it reaches here, and it will be buried early to-morrow."

He expressed no opinion on the necessary killing of Porou. He knew the man had run "amok" and was a danger to the community. He also knew that Ngatae's word was law and that whatever the Chief did or caused to be done was right. For Ngatae's thoughts were always for his people, and in saving his own life he not only saved the life of Hinewhiu, but probably the lives of many others; for Porou was ambitious, and would have climbed over any number of bodies to take Ngatae's place as Chief of Tuhua. That was the dead man's aim, and that was why he wished to prove that Ngatae was a traitor, and therefore unfit to govern.

Ngatae knew all this, and Wahanui knew it, and so also did Whakapaki know it, for the Maori secret service is well-nigh perfect. They do not use notebooks and blunt pencils, nor do they adopt any disguise, but they know everything, and take the necessary steps to prevent the evil from spreading.

And then, of course, what Kongé did not know was not worth talking about, and he had a very clever wife who had learnt to keep her mouth shut when she had picked up any important information, and divulge it only to her husband.

We waited, unobserved, to watch the arrival of the corpse. Before the procession came into view, we heard Tohiora's voice chanting a dirge, but could not distinguish the words. Then they all marched slowly into the village with the "tohunga" at the head, the six men carrying the body following after, and lastly the widow with her little son in her arms. Te Aitu had left her before entering the village, and now worked her way round to join us.

"Let us go," she said, "before Tohiora sees you! He is mad with rage against all white men."

So we paddled across the Whanganui, and wended our way home.

Te Aitu was tired and overwrought, so Hardy would not allow her to help cook our meal. He and I did it between us. Afterwards we all lit our pipes and smoked in silence for some time.

"Do you know," then said my wife, "that Tohiora made a speech over Porou's body where he lay, and told his spirit that he would be avenged on you for bringing the white men to Tuhua? Aué! but he hates you, does this tohunga!"

"And aué! but I don't love him," I replied, laughing.

"I don't think anyone would make a pet of him," said Hardy. "He ought to be put in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors."

That evening, as we sat round the fire in semi-darkness, Te Aitu, who faced the doorway, suddenly gave a start, which made Hardy and me look round.

"I saw a face peering in at the entrance," whispered the girl—"an evil face, like unto that of Tohiora."

Making a sign to Hardy to do likewise, I picked up a stout fire log, and the two of us waited in silence with the weapons in our hands, and our eyes fixed on the little doorway.

A couple of minutes later there was a slight rustling outside, then the white-fringed face of the tohunga appeared. Simultaneously, Hardy and I flung our fire-sticks straight at the head, which disappeared instantly, but not before it had received a nasty blow from my weapon. Hardy's aim was, unfortunately, not quite so true, his stick merely hitting the door-post.

We were on our feet in an instant, and out after the priest, but he had vanished completely and mysteriously, so we

went back laughing. But Te Aitu did not join in our mirth; she only upbraided us for our action, saying that the tohunga would be more incensed than ever against me for insulting him.

"Then he has no business to pry in here," I replied. "We did not ask him to tea."

But Hardy made my wife giggle afterwards by his remarks about Tupu.

"I expect, you know," he said, "Tupu got tired of having no one to talk to last night when he was on guard over Porou. So after a time he invented some story about himself slaying a huge 'taniwha' (fabulous monster), and, when he had got it all off by heart, he went into the prison-house to tell it to Porou. But Porou, being a nasty tempered man at the best of times, could not stand it, so he knocked him down before he had half finished the story. And now Tupu is going round with his head tied up, looking for someone else to tell the tale to."

"It is a pity," laughed Te Aitu, "he had not finished the story. It might have sent Porou to sleep."

"It might have sent him to sleep for ever," said Hardy, "which would have saved us a lot of trouble."

"In that case," I added, "Tupu might have been tried for murder, and perhaps killed for doing a good deed."

Te Aitu's mother Rata came in just then, accompanied by Amohaere and Aorere, so Hardy had to tell them all over again in his "pidgin Maori" what he had said about Tupu's story of the taniwha, at which they laughed immoderately.

"We left Tupu in Ngatae's house," they said.

"Yes," added Aorere, "and I heard him asking Kongé if he had ever been told the story of Maui and the potatoes,

and Kongé asked him if there was anything about women in it, and when Tupu said 'No,' Kongé refused to listen, and went to sleep instead."

"And Tohiora was there," said Rata, helping herself from my tobacco pouch, "looking as black as thunder, with a great bruise on his forehead. He told me an evil spirit had attacked him on his way from Matahanea."

"E ki, an evil spirit!" mocked Te Aitu. "It is the first time I have heard a fire log called a spirit. Para threw it at him when he peeped in at the door, and hit him on the head."

"Ne koia?" laughed the women. "Aué! but he is angry! There is a lump on his head as big as a crow's egg."

And they went off into fresh shrieks of laughter.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE EDGE OF THE SHADOW

It was a blazing hot day as I crossed the marae on my way to Ngatae's house, and a group of women were seated gossiping there, having in their midst the oldest person I ever came across. She had actually seen Captain Cook and remembered him quite well, so that she must have been somewhere about one hundred and twenty years old.

All the time I had been in Taumarunui I had never set eyes on her, and I suppose it was only the intense heat which had brought her out on this occasion. She had been an enthusiastic cannibal, and her first remark on seeing me was that I would be nice to eat. Then she went on to explain to me as well as she was able that the choicest morsel of the human body was the palm of the hand, and she smacked her lips at the thought of it. The old lady mentioned casually that she preferred roast Maori to roast Pakeha, but they both much resembled pork in their flavour.

She was practically naked, as her strip of clothing had partly slipped off her, leaving bare the shreds of skin which had once been her breasts. Completely bald, and of course toothless, she looked like a resurrected mummy.

Her companions seemed annoyed at my discovering her, so I did not linger.

As a rule, so I have been told, when a Maori gets very old indeed, so that he becomes a burden to himself as well as to others, he is induced to sleep in some disused, tumble-down wharé, which is subsequently set alight, and so the aged one departs this life in a volume of smoke which suffocates him before the flames have reached his body.

Which made me wonder at the continued existence of this ancient dame, but I could never find out the why or wherefore. Even Te Aitu simply muttered something about her being a great chieftainess.

After leaving the old mummy, I went on to see Ngatae, who looked stern and worried.

"I want Ellis sent away," he began. "He has caused much trouble in this place."

"He has gone," I replied. "I made him move his camp early this morning a good distance nearer Waimarino."

Not a word was said about Porou, but while I was there Hinewhiu came in with her child. She greeted me as usual, but looked like one who has seen Death at very close quarters. Ngatae met her with a contemptuous scowl.

The conversation languished somewhat. Ata sat grim and lowering, Wahanui was thoughtful, while the chief priest glared at me from a dark corner. Kongé alone smiled, but then he did that even in his sleep.

Presently Aorere and Amohaere slipped in, and sat down one on each side of me. They asked me in an undertone how Tohiora's bump was getting on, to which I replied that I could not see, as he was apparently laying an egg in the corner.

"E hara i te hanga!" said an agonised voice, as Hokimai fell full length on the floor, after catching his foot on the sill of the doorway.

This sent the Maoris off into screams of laughter, and certainly the old man did cut a comical figure as he sprawled there, with his head up and a pathetic look on his face.

"Koia ano!" shouted Ngatae, "the old man is going to get married! It is a sure sign when he falls into a wharé."

"He is looking for Raukura," laughed the women.

"Aué!" groaned Hokimai, as he sat up painfully, rubbing his knees. "I saw smoke rising out towards Taringamotu, so I came to warn you of strangers approaching."

"That's the smoke from the weeds the women are burning," said a cheeky youth. "Hokimai had another reason for coming here."

"Aué! my pipe is empty," said the old man, as if he had just made a discovery.

"That is the reason you came here," jeered the boy delightedly.

So I filled Hokimai's pipe, which was a contrivance holding somewhere about a quarter of a pound of tobacco, and the old man nodded and smiled his thanks before lighting his pipe with trembling hands.

Then I went to my house to say "Good-bye" to Te Aitu before leaving with Hardy for Waimarino. My wife begged me not to stay away too long.

"It is miserable here without you, O Para," she said; "and I am afraid of what Tohiora may do."

"But Rata is going to sleep with you," I said; "and Ngatae will protect you."

"Yes, but they both fear the tohunga, because he threatens them with the anger of the gods."

"Not Ngatae," I replied. "He knows too much, and so does Wahanui."

But this did not seem to satisfy her, and as we pressed our noses together I could see she was crying.

So Hardy and I started off for the plains of Waimarino, but had not got far on our road when we found old Hokimai at a bend of the track, sitting down waiting for us.

He got up and trotted along between us, and presently he spoke.

"I have heard you are going away, O Para, to your work at Waimarino," he began.

I said that was so; that I had to go there to meet a Government contractor, who was coming to inspect the Makatote crossing, in order to estimate the cost.

"Koia!" said the old man. "Then why not take your wife with you?"

"Because she refuses to go among a strange tribe," I answered. "She knows Peehi objects to strange Maoris staying in his district."

"Don't leave her here alone," said Hokimai earnestly. "I have heard what Tohiora the priest has said about her and you. He will work harm on her if he can."

"He dare not!" I answered. "Ngatae will prevent it."

"But Ngatae is going away for a short period," said Hokimai. "He is going down the river in his big canoe to visit other Maoris."

"Is that so?" I exclaimed. "But he will leave Kongé in charge."

"No, O Para; Kongé goes too," replied the old man; "also Aorere and Amohaere, with ten men to paddle the canoe."

"Ah, well, I shall not be away long," I rejoined; "and Rata will sleep with Te Aitu."

"But don't say I warned you, O Para, or you either, O Hati, for I greatly fear the tohunga."

We both promised silence, and left him half-way to Matahanea, with a chunk of tobacco and a box of matches, which delighted him hugely, clutched in his hand.

Then we went on to Ellis's camp, which was pitched in a large clearing in the bush called Otapouri. Here also the Maoris had built a pataka, which the white men made good use of for storing salted pork and other things in.

Ellis looked ashamed and frightened, so I did not mention the subject of Hinewhiu to him. He does not know to this day how Porou died. Only Hardy and I know, and our lips are sealed. Ellis did not hear until long after that the man was dead, so went in fear and trembling of a visit from him, which perhaps did him good and taught him a lesson.

But they were a jolly crowd in the camp that night, and all contributed their share towards giving a concert, with a concertina as sole accompaniment.

It amused me to hear each vocalist solemnly announcing the name of his song after giving what he considered a perfect rendering of it. The only drawback to my mind was the nature of the songs, which were nearly all of a melancholy kind, dealing with the man's mother and the advice she gave to him, or else about a lovely maiden who was madly in love with the singer but unfortunately died at the critical moment. However, the choruses were always given with much feeling.

Tovey, as usual, gave us "Cradle of the Deep," and one of the men—a runaway sailor—sang a variety of sailor "chanties" which he had learnt at sea, the rest of the men joining in with a will.

One of the "hands" was grandson of a former Lord

Chancellor of England, and a very good chap he was too. More willing than any of the others, he would turn his hand to anything. He even tried to sing that evening, in response to repeated calls for "Jack," but unfortunately broke down in the middle of the second verse, and as no one recognised the tune he was adopting, it was impossible to help him through.

In my many years' experience of handling men, I have invariably found that fugitives from justice, ex-gaol-birds, runaway sailors and others of that class make the best workmen, once you have broken down their defences. They are suspicious of you at first, but when they discover that their past history does not interest you, and that you treat them as you would be treated yourself, they become real good chaps, and will do any mortal thing to help you.

Several of the men I employed were of that class, and I never once regretted engaging them.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SHADOW FALLS

I FOUND the Waimarino natives very short of food, owing to a failure in the potato crop. They did not mention it to me for some time after I arrived there, and it was only on my remarking to Peehi that he and most of his people looked ill that he told me there was a famine in the land. He laughed, too, when he said it.

"There is enough for the children, O Para," he said, "and we others can go without. There is 'piko piko' to be found, and 'puwha,' and perhaps we may catch a pig; but you white people seem to have frightened them all away." And he laughed again, as if it were a good joke.

"But you must have food," I said anxiously.

"Meaha!" said the women, "as long as the children are fed."

So I went and found Hardy, and told him of the trouble, and between us we unearthed some flour and tinned meats, which we carried up to the "kaainga," and the next day, which was Sunday, we went pig-hunting—just the four of us: Hardy and myself, Teague the cook, and Casey the packman.

I possessed a dog in those days, the only dog I have ever

owned. He was given me by a Maori woman who called him "Raré," which means "stupid." She said he was useless and disobedient, but I took him nevertheless, and the men in camp made a great fuss of him, calling him "Larry." He had only one eye, but that one was equal to about three ordinary eyes, and what weighed most with the men was that Larry turned out to be a mighty hunter, which was accounted unto him for righteousness. If he once got firm hold of a pig's ear, nothing on earth would force him to let go until the pig was dead.

So he was a welcome guest at Ellis's camp, where he usually stayed. He had followed me from there on this occasion, which was lucky, as I knew that if there happened to be a pig anywhere near, Larry would find him.

And sure enough he did find on two occasions that particular Sunday, and as both of his victims were fine young sows Peehi and his people were well provided with food for some time to come.

Great were the rejoicings that night, and it was really wonderful to see the amount people can eat when they are next door to starving.

Ngawai was there with her husband and child, but all her charming ways had gone. Makaré was at Waimarino too. Peehi had forced her to rejoin her husband Te Ngéné at the village near Taupo where he had gone after his attempt on my life, but the man had died shortly after, so Makaré had returned to her original home.

I found a letter awaiting me at Waimarino to say the contractor would not be there for a week later than his due date, so there was nothing for it but to wait for him.

But on the following evening after the day of the pig-hunt, as I stood talking to the men by the camp fire, Hardy

said suddenly, " There is a Maori boy, sir, coming across the plain from the Tuhua direction."

" He is not one of Peehi's people," said Casey after he had taken a good look.

" Get the glasses and see who it is," I told Hardy.

So he fetched them from my tent, and scanned the oncomer.

" It is Muru," he said presently, " the boy who met Moffatt on the Moerangi."

" I know him," I replied, " the same lad who was sent by Ata to follow Aorere to see whom she was going to meet. I wonder what he wants here ? "

" Bringing an express telegram from Toby, I expect," laughed Casey.

" Asking me to a champagne supper with him, I shouldn't be surprised," added Teague in his rich brogue.

So we waited—Hardy and I anxiously—until the boy got close, when we called out " Greeting ! " to him.

" Greeting to you all ! " cried Muru. " Lo ! I have here a letter for you, O Para." And he gave it to me, and, seeing that the lad was hot and tired, I gave him into Teague's charge, knowing that the kind-hearted Irishman would see that he did not want for food or drink.

Then I opened the letter, which was from my wife, and read it through twice.

" Anything wrong, sir ? " asked Hardy, seeing that I looked worried.

" Te Aitu is ill," I answered, " and wants to see me."

Hardy thought hard for a minute, with a troubled look on his face.

" Anything about Tohiora in the letter, sir ? " he asked.

" Nothing at all," I replied. " No names are mentioned.

She simply says she is ill, and winds up with ' My word to you is this : you must come at once ! ' "

" Depend upon it, there is something crooked somewhere," said Hardy emphatically, " and if any harm is done to the missus, then I shall have something to say to the person who has done that harm, I am damned if I won't ! "

So I started off very early the next morning, with little Muru for my companion, as I had barely four days in which to go to Tuhua and back, being forced to meet the Government contractor at Waimarino on the Friday following.

On my arrival I was surprised and annoyed to discover Te Aitu lying under a temporary lean-to near the bank of the Whanganui River, just beyond Matahanea. She was overjoyed to see me, but so weak that she could not move without assistance.

There were several women with her, her mother, of course, among them. But Ata had taken complete charge of the proceedings and was most masterful in her ways.

Te Aitu told me she had been suddenly taken ill after a meal, and on my asking her why she was not in our house, she whispered that Tohiora insisted on her being dipped in the river three times a day, so they had brought her near the bank for the sake of convenience.

" Damn Tohiora ! " I said. " He will cause your death by doing this."

" Do you know," said my wife, " that I sometimes think he wishes me to die ? He comes here and sits opposite me, and stares at me with those awful eyes of his, until I lose all consciousness. Then they carry me down to the water and put me right in, which wakes me."

" Where is the beast ? " I asked.

" Aua ! " replied Te Aitu. " He heard you were coming, so he went a little while ago towards Taumarunui."

Then I did what I have regretted ever since : I went away from my girl-wife to look for Tohiora.

The women cried out as I was leaving that my place was there by my wife's side, and they were right ! But I was angry and went to find the sorcerer. Once I hesitated when I had got a short distance away and looked back, as Ata broke into a torrent of reproaches. I waited to hear what Te Aitu said, but she only cried out " Meaha ! " so I went on, although I could have sworn there was a sound of tears in her voice. Aué ! Aué ! I still hear that cry at times even now, that attempt to make the other women think that I was acting quite rightly, although her poor heart was breaking.

The Maoris at Taumarunui were astonished to see me, and told me plainly that I ought to have stayed with my wife. But my sole answer to them was, " Where is Tohiora ? " and the only reply I got was an angry " Aua ! "

I hunted for the sorcerer until long after dark, and then I fell asleep in Ngatae's house, which was empty, save for Wahanui and the Chief's two other wives Ngahura and Hita.

At daybreak I started off on my journey back to Waimarino. On my way I stayed with Te Aitu quite a long while, trying to find out what was really the matter with her, but no one could tell me. It was all put down to the native deities. What a lot of evil those deities had to answer for ! I heard the word " makutu " being used in undertones by the women, a Maori word meaning to " bewitch," and gathered that they thought Te Aitu had fallen under a spell. This made me furious, and I am afraid

I was very rude to Ata, who only laughed contemptuously at me and said that if I knew what was wrong with Te Aitu, why did I not cure her?

"Where are your medicines, O Para?" she demanded, and I had to own that I had none.

"Then if you cannot cure your wife, how can you expect us to cure her?" asked Rata.

"You are not trying to cure her," I answered in a fury. "You are trying to kill her by dipping her in cold water."

"Don't be angry, O Para!" said Te Aitu, stroking my hand. "I promise you, I will not let them put me in the river again."

But not content with that, as I knew Tohiora's power, I made all the other women promise not to obey the Witch-doctor, should he again order Te Aitu to be immersed, and with that I had to be satisfied.

So I spent more time than I could spare saying "Good-bye" to my wife. She clung closely to me and cried softly, and when I told her of Hardy's anger and threat against anyone who dared to harm her she bade me give him her love and tell him she hoped to see him back soon.

"Good-bye, O Para!" she whispered. "Don't stay away longer than you can help, but don't neglect your work for me."

So I bade farewell to Te Aitu, and promised to return in a week's time. The Maori way of saying "Good-bye" is quite different from ours: the person who is leaving calls out "E noho!" meaning "Stay!" to the one who remains, who replies, "Haere!" which signifies "Go!"

When I had gone a short distance from my wife I called back again to her "E noho, e Itu!" and she answered in her deep, clear voice, and quite contentedly, I thought,

" Haere, e Para ! Haere ki to mahi ! " telling me to return to my work.

Rangi, the Chief's wife, canoed me across at Matahanea, so I asked her if she thought Te Aitu would soon recover, for the woman had the reputation of being able to foresee the future.

" It rests with you, O Para ! " she replied. " If you stay with your wife she will get well again."

" But I cannot possibly stay," I said, " so what then ? "

" Then it rests with the gods," she answered gravely.

" Does that mean Tohiora ? " I snapped at her, to which she did not deign a reply, but walked in an offended way into her house.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DARKNESS

THE contractor turned out to be a big, raw-boned Scotchman who thought he knew more than any other man, not only about this world, but also about the world to come.

"Sort of Old Moore's Almanac, with a bit of Solomon Eagle thrown in," said Teague, who had just been reading Ainsworth.

The Maoris called him Ruru (Owl), because he wore spectacles and a solemn look, and he certainly did put one in mind of that peculiar night-bird.

"Presently he will call out 'More pork,'" said Ngawai, looking at him with great curiosity. "Ask him if he eats mice, O Para!"

"I suppose," remarked Makaré in a dreamy way, "that he wears those things over his eyes to pretend it is night-time; otherwise he might fall asleep."

Just then the contractor addressed some remark to me in his slow, laborious manner, with a fearful rolling of *r*'s and an accent which made him difficult to understand.

At this there were screams of laughter from the Maoris, in which even Peehi joined.

"Just like the crackling of thunder," said Ngawai. "What has he got in his mouth, Para?"

" Anana ! but he is a funny fellow is this ruru ! " they cried. " Tell him to talk again, O Para."

I was afraid the man might resent the laughter of the Maoris, but he was too busy with his estimates to notice, and he did not understand a word of their language.

" Where does he come from, O Para ? " asked Peehi. " His tongue is not that of an Englishman."

So I told him he came from a land next door to England, where the people lived on oatmeal and whisky, and the men wore short petticoats.

" Ke ! fancy this ruru in a short petticoat and nothing else but those things over his eyes ! " exclaimed Ngawai, laughing. " He would look more like an owl than ever."

The Maoris were quite sorry when the contractor left. The Ruru had been a source of infinite enjoyment to them, and they used to follow him about every day like children, hoping that he would say something with a lot of rolling *r*'s in it.

We celebrated his departure by a great pig-hunt, in which the Maoris also took part, and managed to kill three pigs, thanks principally to Larry, who once more lived up to his reputation.

In the evening I was seated in my tent making out plans, when Hardy came to the entrance.

" Here is Muru coming again, sir," he said.

I sprang up hastily and looked across the plain of tussock grass. Sure enough, there was the little chap making for the camp as quickly as he could.

He handed me a letter from Ngatae to say that Te Aitu was dead !

That was all. Just the bare statement from the Chief, who signed himself my " true friend, Ngatae."

"Not bad news, sir, I hope?" asked Hardy anxiously.

"Te Aitu is dead," I answered quietly.

"Murdered!" cried Hardy, and, turning on his heel, he walked rapidly away from the camp with his head hanging down.

So he and I, with Muru, returned the next day to Tuhua. We did not talk much as we went along, but we thought a great deal, especially Hardy and myself. Te Aitu was buried, so Muru told us, so there was no particular hurry. Her last farewell to me kept ringing in my head—"Haere ki to mahi"—the same words she always used on the occasions when I had to leave her to go to some distant part of the line. Even now, after all these years, I sometimes fancy I hear her calling to me with the sweet-serious voice which matched her face so well.

The Maoris at Matahanea made a great "tangi" when I arrived, and etiquette forced me to stand before them for a minute or two listening to their lamentations, while Hardy went on to my hut to prepare supper.

After I had greeted them all, I asked Ata for particulars of Te Aitu's death, but she would say nothing except "She just died." But presently she broke into a torrent of reproaches about my having left my wife the last night I was there.

"Te Aitu cried all night," she said fiercely. "You broke her heart by not staying with her."

"I thought I was in the way," I said brokenly; "besides, I wanted to find Tohiora."

At the mention of the Witch-doctor's name the women looked glum.

"If you had stayed with Te Aitu she would have lived,"

cried Rata bitterly. " How could you be in the way when she sent for you ? "

But when I questioned them about the priest, the only answer I got was " Aua ! "

Then fierce rage seized me, for I had little doubt in my own mind that Tohiora had persisted in his ill-treatment of my wife, and so caused her death. Besides, how did her illness start ? What was the cause of it ? Anyhow, my object now was to find him.

" Where is the tohunga ? " I asked the women finally.

" He aha mau ? " replied Ata, scowling.

" E ki what is that to me ! " I said angrily. " I will tell you what it is to me when I find him."

With that I left them, and rejoined Hardy at the hut.

Needless to say, it was a sad home-coming for me. To enter our house, with its mistress gone for ever ! No welcoming smile, no loving greeting. But the worst part of all was to see her clothes hanging up in their accustomed place as if she were expected in any minute, and the bed she used to lie on neatly made, just as she always left it. And to think that she had died without any apparent cause ! A girl like that, too, who had been kind to everyone and incapable of harm ! It was too horrible to think of. And all to happen in a few short days !

We had finished our pretence at a meal, and were sitting there smoking, with Te Aitu's vacant place between us, and I had just told Hardy how I wished I could find out what Tohiora really had done to my wife, but that it seemed impossible, as the matter was evidently " tapu " by the natives, when a voice sounded in the doorway.

" Tena korua, pakeha ma ! " said Te Rehe.

" Hullo, Rehe ! " said Hardy, and we bade her welcome and gave her food.

Then she stuck a little black pipe in her mouth, filled it with my tobacco, and started to smoke like a chimney.

" I heard you asking Ata about Tohiora the tohunga, O Para," she said presently, " and what he did to Te Aitu, but Ata would not tell you, neither would Rata or any of the other women. But I was there and saw how the tohunga bewitched your wife, so that she let him do what he would with her. Soon after you left for Waimarino, Tohiora came to where Te Aitu lay, and she told him that you had forbidden her to go in the river. Then Tohiora laughed and said, ' What is a white man's word to me ? ' And he looked hard at Te Aitu, while he sang an incantation, until presently she lay as a dead woman. Then he ordered her to be carried down to the river and dipped in it. And so it happened three times that day and three times the next day, and in between each time Te Aitu grew worse, and I heard her sometimes crying for you.

" But on the third morning, when the tohunga arrived, Te Aitu said to him, ' I am not going any more to the river, but presently I shall go to the Reinga, where you cannot follow me.' And she turned on her side as one about to sleep.

" Still Tohiora tried to makutu (bewitch) her, and after a while he said, ' Carry her down to the river.' So the women came to lift her, but lo ! she was dead.

" And that is how your wife died, O Para ; but do not let the others know that I told you, lest they be angry ; though they will not beat me, because I am porangi."

Then she went away, running quickly, and left me to my thoughts.

So we sat in silence until darkness came, and I noticed that Hardy kept his eyes in any direction but mine. I buckled on my revolver then, and went out to Ngatae's great wharé.

The Chief's house was full, as it usually was when he himself was in residence. A mournful wail went up from the women as I entered, and I heard the word " pouaru " (widower) and such remarks as " He looks like a corpse," " Aué ! but Para is angry," and so forth. But I took no notice, save to return their greetings. I had come with one object only—to find Tohiora.

When my eyes had got accustomed to the smoke I looked searchingly round the room, but the priest was not there.

Ngatae tried to engage me in conversation about Peehi Turoa and the Maoris in Waimarino, and I did my best to answer him, but all the time I was watching the doorway in expectation of Tohiora's entrance. He did not come, however, so after a little while I went away.

When I got outside in the darkness I bumped into someone, and instinctively sprang back and felt for my revolver, but Hardy's voice reassured me.

" I thought you might want me, sir," he said ; and I knew it was Tohiora's knife he was thinking of.

CHAPTER XXIX

HUNTING THE WITCH-DOCTOR

THE Maoris looked askance at me the next day and avoided me as much as possible. Even Ngatae strode away when he saw me approaching, so great is the superstitious fear of a tohunga among the natives.

If a witch-doctor tells a Maori he is going to die on a certain date, the prophecy is bound to come true, even though (as I mentioned elsewhere) the unfortunate patient has only a touch of the megrims. It is all, I suppose, a matter of hypnotism; but, call it what you will, it is a very potent force. On several occasions I have inquired for a Maori I have chatted with a week or so previously, and have been met with the answer, "He is dead!" When I have exclaimed in astonishment and asked what killed him, the reply has still been the same, "He is dead!" with a shrug of the shoulders and a quick change of conversation to show the subject was "tapu." So I always knew then that the weird, mysterious witch-doctor had hastened the patient's departure through his ignorance, and had put it all down to the "will of the gods."

The Maori religion is called "Hau Hau," and they hold secret services at stated times in a wharé set apart from the other huts. These are kept strictly private, and no white man is admitted on any account.

I looked on Te Aitu's death as a clear case of murder, and Tohiora knew it. Hence his avoidance of me. The girl was aware that the submersion in the river, besides causing her great pain, was preventing her recovery, so she struggled hard against it, but of course without avail, seeing that all the fools of women were acting blindly on the priest's orders.

I thought over all these things as I wandered about looking for Tohiora. I had not paused to consider what I should do with the man when I caught him, but I believe I was possessed of a devil all the time I was searching for him, and I knew that shooting was too good for him. So I tramped weary miles in pursuit of the arch-fiend, and the more he eluded me the more my anger grew.

There was a half-flood in the river, so it was somewhat difficult to cross, the water being muddy in addition to its volume. I had crossed and recrossed it several times, and was on my way back to Matahanea from the Taupo side, when the girl Te Rehe suddenly emerged from the high fern at the side of the track.

"Are you looking for Tohiora?" she asked, "because I saw him not long ago go up into the bush where Porou went when Ngatae followed to kill him. He had a gun in his hand, and was walking quickly."

"How long ago?" I asked.

"When the sun was there," she answered, pointing to where it would be about two o'clock. It was now three in the afternoon, so the priest was an hour ahead of me, and I was weary. But I turned back and recrossed the Whanganui, though with more difficulty, as it was now higher than when I came over before.

I found the entrance to the bush, and proceeded cautiously

along the narrow path, revolver in hand. Right through to the clearing I went and stood for some time by the pataka, thinking of the last time I was there with Te Aitu and Hardy, when Porou's wicked career was brought to a close by the Chief Ngatae.

I pictured again the whole scene, with Hinewhiu on her knees sobbing her heart out, while Te Aitu's loving arm held her in a compassionate embrace and the dead face of Porou looked upward with unseeing eyes.

Suddenly a bullet whistled past me, and I dodged behind the pataka for safety. Seeing, however, that the store-house afforded small shelter for my legs, I presently ran out as hard as I could towards the bush, but at right-angles to the way I had come, so as to present as difficult a target as possible for the man with the gun. The tables were turned with a vengeance, and it was a case now of the hunter being hunted.

So I sprinted for all I was worth to gain the shelter of the trees, but another shot nearly brought me down, the bullet just grazing my calf as I ran.

Then I flung myself into the undergrowth, where I lay panting for a minute or so, thinking desperately. Finally, I made up my mind to regain the track and have it out with the priest. So I wormed my way round cautiously, with my revolver at the ready, and, after what seemed a very long time, I found myself on the beaten path close to where it led out into the clearing.

There I waited and listened, with my heart beating like a sledge-hammer. At any moment I might be shot down as I stood there, feeling like a fool who has put his head into a trap. A rustling overhead made me look up quickly, but it was only a pair of huia birds foraging in their usual

way, which is rather peculiar, for the male bird, having a short, stout bill, knocks off the bark and exposes the grub underneath, when the female, with her long, curved bill, takes it out and together they eat it.

Something made me glance into a low tree to the left of where the birds were, and there I saw a face watching me, which caused me to spring back behind a giant red pine for shelter.

"Tohiora has gone, O Para," said a voice which was certainly not that of the priest.

"Who are you?" I queried.

"Muru," answered the boy, as he climbed down from his perch and came up to me. "I came here to snare birds, and when Tohiora went to the pataka I hid and watched him. As he was passing back again, he heard your footsteps as you came from the river, so he concealed himself in a leafy tree at the edge of the clearing to watch who was with you. Then you went out to the pataka, and after a while, seeing that you were alone, he took careful aim and fired at you, but missed. Again, when you ran to the bush for shelter he fired to kill you, for he knew not he had a witness, and besides, what would my word be against his? Then, fearing lest you might come on him unawares, he came down from the tree and walked back quickly towards the river."

"That is where I am going also," I remarked, starting off.

"We two together," said Muru, as he trotted after me.

There was no sign of the priest when we emerged from the bush, but presently Muru sighted him nearing the ford. So we hurried after him through the manuka scrub, which brought back recollections of Te Aitu and our race through it to rescue Hinewhiu; then on through the high, coarse

fern until we reached the river bank, when we saw Tohiora nearly half-way across the ford above the rapids.

The Whanganui was very high and muddy, so the Witch-doctor could only move slowly on his journey over. He had taken the pole I had left there at my last crossing, so I went to get another. Muru cried out that he was too short to ford the river in flood, so would scramble down the rough side where we stood.

"See!" he shouted excitedly in my ear, "it is up to Tohiora's breast, but you can cross, O Para, if you are careful, for you are taller than he is." Then he ran off.

I soon found a stout young sapling, and, standing on the bank, I looked for Tohiora, but he was nowhere to be seen! It was not possible, I thought, for him to have got over, as the river was running nearly bank and bank, about one hundred and eighty yards wide. Where on earth had he gone, I wondered? He could not have been washed down, as Maoris can stand against almost any current.

Anyhow, I must follow him, no matter where or how he had gone. So I waded in, starting as far above the ford as possible to allow for the strength of the current forcing me down stream and over the falls.

The roar was terrific, and I had to feel my way with very great care, keeping my eyes on the opposite bank to prevent the sight of rushing water making me giddy. Several times I was half lifted off my feet, and in one place near the centre the turgid water swirled over my left shoulder. But I won through, and then lay exhausted on the bank.

After a while I sat up and looked round, but there was no sign of the sorcerer, so I got to my feet and trudged on towards Matahanea, first unstrapping my revolver from round my neck where I had managed to keep it fairly dry.

When I reached the village I was met with angry looks, but not a word was spoken. So I passed through stolidly, noting as I went that Muru was giving his version of matters to Whakapaki. That blessed boy seemed to crop up at every crisis, and one never knew which side he was espousing. I had no doubt on this occasion he was telling the Chief that I was responsible for the non-appearance of the Witch-doctor, for he had seen him with his own eyes half-way across the river with me in pursuit. Which was unfortunately true if it came to my trial for what the Maoris call "Ngaki mate," meaning to "take vengeance for a death." However, I was just then in a mood not to mind what happened to me, so long as Tohiora got his deserts.

The crazy girl Te Rehe ran after me and canoed me across the river.

"Where is Tohiora the tohunga, O Para?" she asked as I was leaving her.

"I don't know," I answered.

"That is not true!" she shouted, as she paddled back. "You know well enough, but you won't tell."

I shrugged my shoulders and walked away. One cannot argue with a porangi.

CHAPTER XXX

THE WILL OF THE GODS

I STOOD outside my hut the next morning and bathed in the glorious sunshine. After all, I thought, it was good to be alive and to have escaped Tohiora's bullets, to be able still to feast my eyes on the gorgeous scenery spread before me, the shining river, the ever-green hills on the other side, with their different shadings, touched here and there with patches of scarlet and white, the higher ranges beyond looking blue and purple in the distance, while the huge mountains of Ruapehu and Tongariro stood out clear and majestic. It was all most lovely, and many a time Te Aitu and I had stood there and wondered at its marvellous beauty.

Everything around looked so calm and peaceful that it was difficult to realise what I had gone through in the last few days, but a sudden angry rumble from Tongariro, accompanied by smoke and flame, brought me back to earth again and made me somehow think of Tuatini of Ruakaka, with his honeyed accents and charming smile which only veiled a heart set on killing.

There was not a sound from the Maoris, but this I put down to their probably having gone parrot hunting, which

they do at a certain season in the year when the berries are ripe and plentiful. The parrots then come down to the bushes which bear the most berries and gorge themselves to such an extent that they are unable to fly for some time after. So they fall an easy prey to the hunters, who knock them over with sticks and devour them with great relish on account of the huge amount of fat they contain. A favourite way of cooking them is to wrap them in clay and bake them in red-hot ashes.

So, thinking the Maoris were engaged in this favourite pastime of theirs, I did not give a second thought to the unusual silence, but stood there waiting for Hardy, who was going up to the ford with me to try and find out how Tohiora had escaped me the day before. We agreed that his sudden disappearance was most mysterious and incomprehensible, and were determined to find out how he had played the trick on me.

I was thus merged in thought when I suddenly saw in the distance a vast concourse of natives coming towards me! When they got nearer I called Hardy, and together we watched them approaching. They were moving forward in a dense mass, without any formation, trampling down the fern, which was shoulder-high in places, and heading straight for us.

"Something has upset them, sir," said Hardy after a time; "they seem very angry Shall I get the second revolver?"

"Yes," I said, "but don't show it to them unless you are forced."

So together we stood and waited, and, for my own part, I tried to look as natural as possible, though I foresaw trouble. I knew the Maoris better than Hardy knew them,

and was aware that anything touching their religion made them revert to their savage state.

On they came, men and women, talking excitedly among themselves. They seemed to be unarmed, but a few of them carried sticks. I recognised Takirau and Hika among them, which boded trouble.

Hardy was humming the "British Grenadiers," his favourite air in times of danger or excitement. I glanced at him once and saw that he was "riding with his chin up."

The Maoris were now quite close—only about a chain away—so I sang out "Greeting!" A volley of stones was my answer, and then a man bellowed, "Where is Tohiora?"

"I know not," I answered, and I heard Hardy mutter, "Damn Tohiora!"

"You lie!" yelled young Hika to me, and on top of his cry there were shouts of "He ru!" (An earthquake!), and the whole assembly staggered about like drunken people, while the tall fern swayed backwards and forwards with a swishing sound, and the volcano belched out fire and smoke. Hardy and I clung to the posts of the wharé until the shock was over and the rumbling had died away.

Then a hag cried out, "Behold! the gods are angry with the white men!" and the mob were on us.

Maoris are no boxers, but they have plenty of pluck and stamina. They came on now in bunches, and we were hard put to it to keep them off. I heard Hardy cry "Good old England!" as he caught Hika a blow under the chin which knocked him backwards. I don't know how many I accounted for, but my knuckles were raw for days after.

Still they came on, but leaderless, and I was beginning to hope we might yet stave them off without using our revolvers when out of the corner of my eye I saw Hardy go down with a crash, with half a dozen Maoris on top of him. Instinctively I stepped forward to try to rescue him, which gave my attackers the opening they had been fighting for, and as they pressed in behind me, one man, who, I think, was Takirau, brought his stick down on the back of my head, and all I remember after that was hearing the angry voice of Ngatae calling on the mob to desist.

When I came to my senses, a great while afterwards, it was to find Amohaere bathing my head with cold water, and on looking round wearily I saw Aorere performing a like office for Hardy. Ngatae and Kongé were also there, the former looking angry, while his son had the appearance of a man who is in the front stalls at a really good comic opera.

"Drink this, O Para!" said Amohaere. "Your mother-in-law Rata left it here for you." And she handed me a small gourd full of a dark liquid.

So I gulped down half of the herbal medicine she had concocted and felt much better in consequence.

"Give the rest to Hati!" I said, which they did, with good results, and I wondered if they had tried anything of the sort on Te Aitu, or if they had let her die without help, to please Tohiora.

After a short silence, Aorere asked Hardy where the most pain was, and he replied, "Just where the earthquake hit me!" at which the two girls laughed and Ngatae smiled grimly.

"And did the earthquake catch you round the neck and

pull you down, and then kick you and hit you, O Hati ? " asked Aorere in pretended innocence.

" It did all that," said Hardy, " and when I tried to get up, it sat on my head and called me a white pig."

" Koia ano ! " screamed the girls. " Was there ever such an earthquake before ! And did you say anything to it, O Hati ? "

" Oh, yes, I did say something," replied Hardy thoughtfully. " I know I said ' Damn ! ' several times, and called it a ' boiled head ' and the son of a ' taniwha.' "

" And did the earthquake answer you ? " cried Aorere, in huge delight.

" It said ' Taurekareka ' three times, and then spat in my face," said Hardy.

" Koia ! Koia ! " laughed the girls. " And how did you get rid of it, O Hati ? "

" I don't know," answered Hardy, " but I expect Ngatae had a lot to do with it."

" Ae ! Ka tika tau," said Aorere. " Ngatae drove the earthquake away just before it killed you. Aué ! but you did look ugly when we carried you into the wharé ! You had one eye open and one shut, your nose was like a lump of earth, and the blood was streaming from your head and mouth. And you were not much better, O Para," she said turning to me ; " there is a cut on the back of your head as long as my hand."

" Oh ! I am all right ! " I replied, as I tried to rise. " Just a bit weak, that is all."

" It is well to leave the Maori tohunga alone, O Para ! " said Ngatae sternly.

" Not when he is a murderer ! " I answered angrily. " I wish I could find him."

As I finished speaking, Kongé held up his hand for silence. "He tangi!" he said. "Listen, O friends!"

And as we listened the sound of wailing voices was carried to our ears from the direction of Matahanea, telling us that someone was dead.

So we all went out of the house to hear better, Hardy and I with great difficulty, for we were sorely bruised and battered, and, finding that the chant of mourning women was growing louder, we moved still farther, until the six of us stood near the bridle-path which connected Matahanea and Taumarunui.

Here we stood and waited in silence, while the agonised cried of bitter grief rose and fell and echoed around as the wailing mourners drew nearer. Ngatae stood a pace in front of us, and once he turned and looked sharply and inquiringly at me, as if he thought I could unravel the mystery.

Louder and louder grew the heart-rending wail as the women got closer to us, until round a bend in the track there appeared a procession of women and men, two abreast, following a litter on which lay a body borne by six stalwart natives.

At the head of the procession stalked Whakapaki, the Matahanea Chief, and immediately behind the litter came his wife Rangi as leader of the wailing mourners who followed at her heels, howling each time she gave them their keynote. Their eyes were suffused with tears, and as they drew near to us they raised their voices louder, until one could distinguish certain words, among them "Tohiora" and "tohunga," so then I knew that the prone figure lying under the woven flax garment was that of my enemy the Witch-doctor.

When the bearers had got opposite to us they halted and set down their burden, and Ngatae, going forward slowly, followed by the five of us, raised the covering from the face of the dead, disclosing to view the distorted, discoloured face of Tohiora.

The Chief re-covered the face gently, and then asked, "How did this happen?" One of the mourners pushed forward the boy Muru. Somehow it was always Muru.

"Lo! I found him, O Ngatae," said the boy. "Tohiora was drowned while crossing the river at the last ford as you go towards Taupo. The river was in great flood when he tried to cross, and the white man Para, who was behind him, could only just reach the other side with great difficulty. But Tohiora got one foot wedged between two boulders, and the current threw him over on his side, so that he could not move and was drowned. I saw him lying there to-day, the river having fallen, and ran to fetch Whakapaki and others, who have brought him here. That is all, O Ngatae."

And Ngatae spoke not for the space of a minute, but stood there, drawn up to his full height, looking thoughtfully across the river towards the blue mountains.

"It is the will of the gods!" he said at last, and motioned the procession to move on.

As the last of the mourners went by, Ngatae turned and held out his hand to me.

"I thought you had killed Tohiora, O Para," he said, "and my heart was angry against you. But now I know I was wrong. It was the gods who killed him."

"Yes!" I answered, "and even as Tohiora killed Te Aitu with river water, so also did the gods slay him

with the same weapon, for great is the wisdom of the gods."

Ngatae considered for a moment, as the wailing rose and died away, and then said deliberately, " Ae ra ! Ka tika tau, e Para ! "

CHAPTER XXXI

TWO YEARS AFTER

THE Maoris of Tuhua have chosen a beautiful spot in which to lay their dead. It is a tableland above the Whanganui River, with a background of bush-clad hills, among which looms the Sacred Mountain, and having a view in front of the valley and the slopes beyond, of the miles of wooded country stretching out to Waimarino, with Tongariro and Ruapehu towering over all in the far distance. Absolutely calm and peaceful the graveyard lies—a very fitting resting-place.

Hardy and I stood at the edge of the tableland and looked out over the scene for the last time, for we were leaving Maoriland on the morrow for ever, so far as we knew.

"It makes me wonder where we came from and where we are going to," at length said Hardy, with a sweep of his arms to indicate the landscape. "Don't you feel it that way too, sir?"

I simply nodded, and presently he went on in a low tone, as if talking to himself.

"It seems to me," he said, "that, except for one reason, I am not altogether sorry to go." And when he spoke of the "reason" I knew he meant the grave behind us.

"Nor am I altogether sorry to leave," I agreed; "but

as regards the ' reason ' you mention, I think Te Aitu would have been very miserable here now watching the break-up of the old Maori ways and traditions, and, above all, the crowding in of white people of all descriptions."

" You are right, sir," answered Hardy. " It would have just about broken her heart. One has only got to see what a change has taken place since you came here first ! What will it be like in another four or five years—that is, if the Government ever finds the money to go ahead again ? "

" Yes, Maoriland will soon be a name only," I said. " With the passing of the old chiefs, their successors will try to ape the Europeans, rather than be derided as savages ; and then good-bye to the race."

" I wonder what Porou and old Tohiora would say to it all ? " said my henchman with a laugh.

" I wonder, too ! " I echoed, as we made our way down the steep path to the river and entered our canoe.

We disembarked at Matahanea, and trudged down to Taumarunui to spend our last evening with the people I knew and liked so well.

" Here comes Para ! " cried a woman, " with his shadow behind him—the shadow he calls Hati."

" Naumai ! " they called out, " naumai, e Para ! "

" Aué ! " wailed Amohaere, " it is the last time we can welcome Para, for he goes to-morrow to other lands."

" It is a bad thing for you to go, O Para," said Ngatae, " for now we shall have no one to stand between us and these slaves of white men. Te Aitu was quite right when she said they are an evil race. Now they overrun our land, and it no longer belongs to us. These cursed white men come and peer into our houses and insult our wives and daughters, so that nothing is sacred from them."

" Ae ra ! " put in Aorere, shaking her head. " Great is our love for you, O Para, but it was an evil day when you first came to Tuhua. We were happy before you came, before your white Queen broke her oath."

And I could only shrug my shoulders and say my heart was sad.

Kongé the ever smiling asked me how long it would be before the Government raised sufficient money to complete the railway, and I replied that I did not know, but that as far as Peehi Turoa was concerned he hoped it would be never.

" Ae ! a wise man is Peehi," said Ngatae, " and I am glad his young wife has borne him a son."

" Yes," I agreed, " and so am I, but his old wife is not pleased."

" No more than Ata is pleased at my having given birth to a boy," laughed Aorere. " I have called him after you, O Para, for one of his names ! "

" It is good ! " I replied. " When I reach Waipounamu I will send him a lump of greenstone for luck."

" And send some for my daughter, O Para ! " begged Amohaere ; " for I have called her ' Te Aitu ' after your wife."

" That will I, of course," said I, " and a tatua (belt) each for you and for Aorere."

" Did you hear that Topi is married ? " broke in Hardy.

" Né koia ? " they shrieked. " Topi te porangi ? Koia ano ! " and they screamed with laughter.

" Did he marry another porangi, O Hati ? " asked Amohaere.

" No ! he married a lodging-house keeper, with a vile temper," I explained.

" And she makes Topi do all the washing and cooking," grinned Hardy.

" Anana ! " screamed the women. " And does the porangi wear his wife's clothes while she wears his trousers ? "

" Yes, I believe so," said Hardy, " and when he tries to sing ' Cradle of the Deep ' his wife throws things at him."

At this the girls laughed more than ever, for his everlasting song had been a source of endless amusement to them.

" As Hokimai would have said, ' E hara i te hanga ! ' " I remarked. For the old man who eschewed cleanliness had passed away in an apologetic manner a month or two before.

" If he had lived a little longer he might have married Moka," drawled Kongé, " as Raukura would not have him."

" E ki Moka ! " shouted the owner of that name. " What have I to do with you, O Kongé ? "

" You had something to do with him once," cried Ngakura, at which they all laughed except Moka.

" That was long ago," she said quietly. " Many moons have passed since then."

" Yes, and many things have happened since then,"said Rangi, who was there with her husband and Hinewhiu, now happily married a second time. " Para had not come here then," she went on dreamily, " nor Amohaere. Many who were here then have gone to the Reinga, Para's wife among them. Aué ! Aué ! " And the other women moaned in concert.

" The gods have been angry with us," continued Rangi. " They have taken our people one after another when we

did not expect them to die and before their allotted time. Aué ! I can foresee the future when this land shall have passed away from the Maori and be given to the Pakeha. Already the white men are swarming in like flies after a rotting carcase. Alas ! for the Maori race."

" The carcase is not rotten yet, woman," said Ngatae angrily. " Perchance the flies will be eaten by the birds before they settle on the meat."

" Ae ! you are right, O Ngatae," said Wahanui. " We will not be robbed of our lands without a struggle, and we know now that white people do not keep their word, so we will not trust them again."

" Have your men all gone, O Para ? " asked Ngatae.

" Yes," I replied ; " they have all left Maoriland. I shall be the last to go, with Hardy."

" It is good," said the Chief, " and I pray to the gods that they may never return. As for you, O friend, my heart is sad at your going, for you are one of ourselves and have married one of our race, a cousin of mine also, so that you belong to the Tuhua tribe and are a connection of mine. It is right that you should remain here. But perhaps some day you may return and dwell in this land ? Great is my wish that you may do so."

And the other Maoris all echoed his entreaties, so that my heart was full of sadness at the thought of parting.

The next morning I pressed noses all round, which took a considerable time, especially with Amohaere and Aorere, who clung to me and would not be comforted, shedding bitter tears of sorrow at my going.

Then I rode off after Hardy with the farewell cries of " Haere, e Para ! " ringing in my ears, bidding me depart in peace.

I halted on the rise which would presently hide them from my view, and looked back. They were still standing in the same place where I had left them—a great host, they seemed—and, as I waved my final farewell to them, a mighty shout arose from the warriors, mingled with the shriller notes of the women, " Haere, e Para ! "

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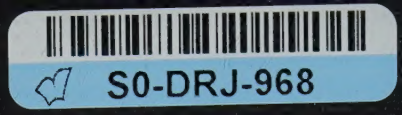
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